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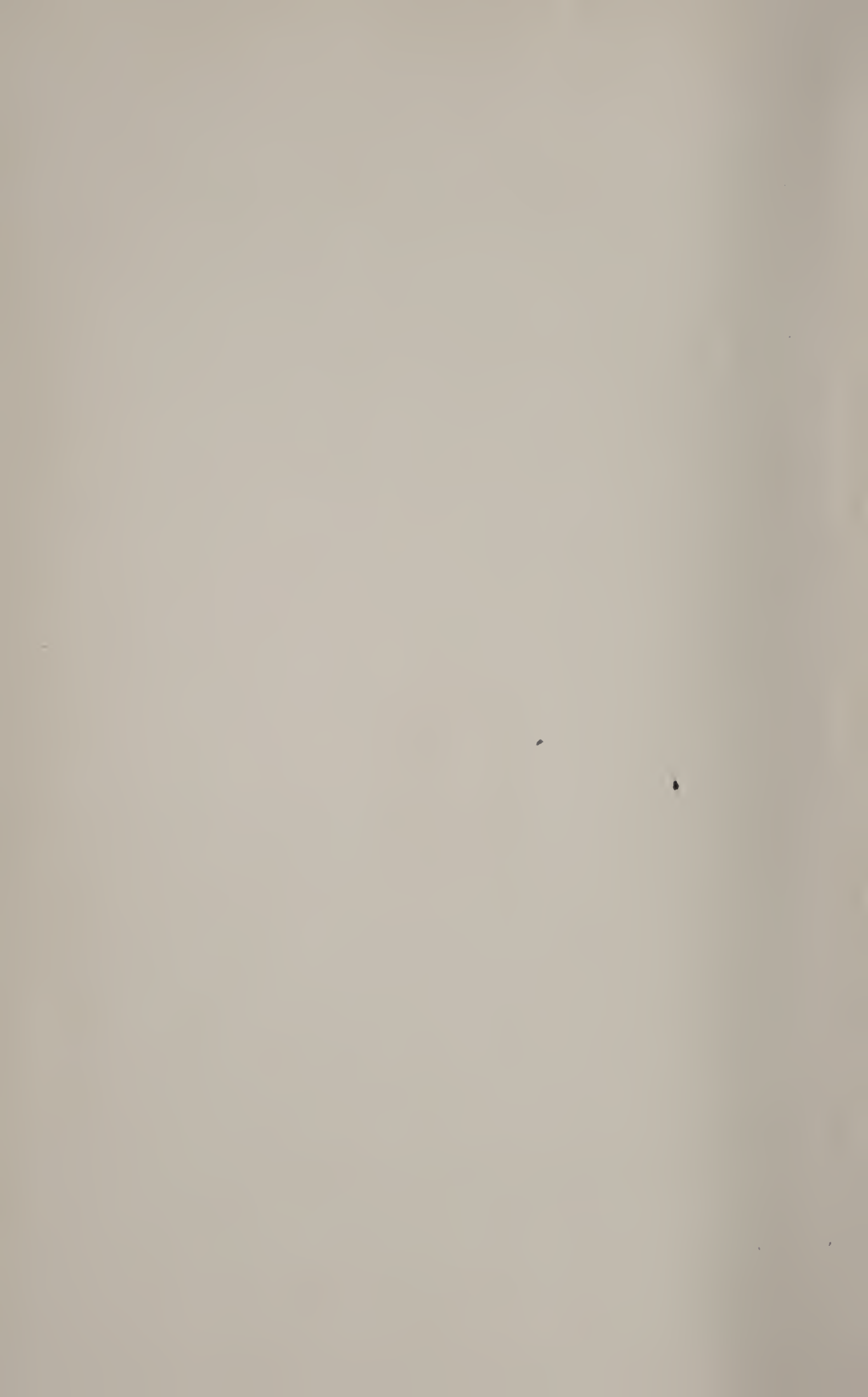
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Invisible

Wings

A Novel



Invisible Wings

By
Mary Geary Grant



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To
My Mother

*For you who believed in Invisible wings
And taught me to love the intangible things,
In lonely hours, I've found and fashioned Dory;
And traced for you a little play-girl's story,
A painted girl;— yet rouge, powder, and kohl
Hide not the azure radiance of her soul!*

MARY

INVISIBLE WINGS



CHAPTER I

IN five minutes the silver bells would ring the hour. A chaplain would appear on the altar steps and he would read the service as was the custom in the Seminary on Christmas Eve. Now the chapel was profoundly silent. Silent were the girls whose shrouded heads were seen dimly behind the large grate which separated them from the world.

Of the students who remained during Christmas vacation two sat with drowsy eyes in the first pew. One, Zoe Sand, a weird, dark-haired girl of seventeen, was conscious only of the fact that she was very sleepy, and that the incense and candle light made her more so. But she smiled encouragement to her companion, Doreen O'Moore, who was to sing a solo.

Doreen stood tall and slender at the rail, her shining eyes wide and her soul alive to the beauty of her surroundings, and the sanctity of the moment.

She drank in the wonder of the altar which was set like a jewel on the dark green carpeted steps. It was covered with golden brocade. Innumerable candles

formed a design of soft yellow lights leading to the tabernacle.

Lilies leaned in their mystic beauty against the stained glass windows at either side of the altar. And around the tabernacle gardenias breathed forth all their life in waves of intense perfume.

A clarion-like bell struck the cold December air, and while it was vibrating all the other bells in the world joined in, vying with each other to play the most exalted harmony. From the choir came Doreen O'Moore's voice — very low at first with deep notes, then a little clearer until it soared in tremulous ecstasy out into the chapel. It went to each heart, folding it tenderly, and like the spirit of music it lifted each soul to the presence of God. Then the voice grew fainter, passed, yet lingered like the scent of vanished roses. The Directress looked approvingly up into the choir, and her face became very grave, for she saw that Doreen had grown into womanhood.

After Christmas salutation, The Dean detained The Directress, — “I see that little Doreen O'Moore is quite a beauty,” she said.

“Yes, and she has been with us so many years and is leaving at the end of this term.”

“Ah, yes — ” a smile lightened up the sad old eyes — “the bud has blossomed over-night,” she whispered, and then sighed. “Ah, Sister, I must give less time to science and more to the children in the future, but I am getting old — even now I do not quite remember about Dory.”

"She was to have left us last June," said Sister Sebastian.

The thin mouth of the Superior contracted into a line beneath the sharp aquiline nose, and one eyebrow climbed her high finely wrinkled forehead as she listened. She was one of those people who balance their thoughts on their eyebrows.

"She wished to make her living by singing in public and we feared the temptation which would come her way."

"Ah," sighed The Directress, nodding her head sadly. "In what profession would a girl of that beauty be safe? Will she not always remain with us, Sister?"

"I fear the wings are impatient to fly," replied Sister Sebastian.

Again the doubtful eyebrow climbed the forehead.

"But, I feel she is meant for some great work in the world."

"We will pray," said the soft, monotonous voice of the old woman. "We must pray. Send the child to me tomorrow after Benediction. Good night, Sister."

Sister Sebastian tiptoed out of the room, and went upstairs to the dormitory. Obeying an impulse, she stopped at Doreen's cot.

"Good night, dear," she whispered, "And thank you for the beautiful solo, it was well sung."

The girl flung her arms around the nun and kissed her on both cheeks but Sister Sebastian loosened one fluttering hand and held it quietly in both her own,

as she said, " My dear child, we shall miss you so — and be so anxious about your welfare. Remember I have seen the tender little wings of your womanhood sprout and grow — I have helped train each little feather — "

Suddenly Doreen tautened and sat up; her brown eyes flashed like fireflies in the dim light of the dormitory.

" They have given me no strong wings here! " she cried.

The nun caught both hands of the temperamental girl as Doreen struggled for articulation. In some strange way she divined the sense of *unconstructive* education — and she had devoted ten years — the most formative of her life from the eighth to the eighteenth year of her age to school and at this point she held nothing but a smattering of all — a mental possession of none.

" Child, child," pleaded the nun, " remember God has been good. He has given you beauty, a sweet voice — "

" A voice! " echoed Doreen. " But it's not trained. I have nothing to market — and practically no money — "

" But we — we *beg* you to stay here," pleaded Sister Sebastian.

" I have no vocation for religion," responded the girl.

Sister Sebastian vainly sought to justify the stereotyped form of modern school routine. " Dory, you

have always appeared to love your studies — as well as your play and you have always done well in your music lessons, your spelling, algebra, and you were at the head of your class in history! ”

“ Yes, but it is all diffused. I have wasted the ten most formative years of my life. Personally, as you know, I have always wanted to become a musician. All my studies should have been directed with that end in view. Every girl in this school had an inclination, if not a talent that showed itself when she was about ten. Wouldn't it be wonderful if each were given a decent chance in life by having something to offer, a profession, a trade, something, anything tangible! ”

Sister Sebastian's gaze penetrated the walls of the seminary to a more Utopian world where manifested inclinations, or their comparative state, talent, and the rare superlative state, genius, would be gently trained, each according to its species as the fragile vine can be led by a human hand to become a thing of protection and beauty and usefulness. But she dared not express her acquiescence to her pupil.

After a moment of silence Dory begged forgiveness for her impulsive complaint, and the nun blessed her before leaving. But Sister Sebastian was strangely troubled as she went to her cell that night and remained on her knees longer than usual.

CHAPTER II

IT was Christmas afternoon in the Seminary. The recreation room — a very long, very bare room with spotless highly-polished floors and benches. Doreen and Zoe sat with Sister Sebastian and the three talked of various uninteresting things.

There was the customary silence when the bells rang the Angelus in Puccini-like melody. The young teacher studied Zoe Sand's pretty face.

Zoe was very dark. Yet her hair was not black, but a tawny brown that branched out in golden threads at the temples. It was coiled up with a pretty movement to the back of her head. She wore the simple black uniform of the convent, but her waist as always was bound in tightly with a ribbon, tied with that rakish bow she was known for and secretly proud of. The spotless white collar showed a pretty, rather brown neck which had a charming bend at the back and a strong line in front that melted into a full dimpled chin. The little nose was straight and very fine with dents back of the delicate nostrils that gave her face a sort of pretty emphasis, but not yet could you tell what was emphasized, and the mouth had nothing of this precision and character; it was red as a flower of youth, and wide and rather formless.

“Your teeth are chiseled to an impeccable evenness,” smiled Sister Sebastian, as the Angelus ceased, and Zoe smiled up at her. “And you have eyes like a Chinese girl, they are prettily curved up at the corners,” the instructor went on as if amused with Zoe’s interest in hearing herself described.

“But I haven’t hands like a Chinese girl,” pouted Zoe. “Sister, just look at them!”

For though Zoe was quite tall and thin her hands were plumb and short with stubby fingers, but she had given most careful attention to pointing and training the square, pink nails.

“I see you are getting ready for social experiences,” said the Sister, smiling at the high polish on those nails, and then turning to Dory, “Read me the invitation from Mrs. Sand, dear.”

Promptly a delicate pink note was produced from Dory’s skirt pocket, tenderly smoothed out, and putting her arm around Zoe, she began:

“Dearest Zoe:

“I have just decided to accompany your uncle when he goes abroad, for a year, — but I cannot leave you here in the apartment alone. I am not very strong and it is absolutely necessary that I go, and as you are now a young lady, dearie, you do not really need me to take care of you. Can you not persuade this beloved chum of yours, Dory O’Moore, to come and stay here with you? Old nurse Emma will take good care of you both during my absence. Your little

friend might give music lessons — if she wished — that would start her for next year when she might take a studio.

“Write her answer at once — that I may make my arrangements. When you arrive, your uncle and I are going to give you a present of a nice fur coat. Love from

“Mother.”

Dory read in an oratorical style that gave due importance to this screed, and finishing she closed her eyes and hugged her knees with quivering delight. “And the end of the story is,” said she, “that Zoe did not have a hard time in persuading her friend to accept.”

Well, it really is very nice,” said Sister Sebastian. Then she gazed for a moment at the girl’s lovely face and for some strange reason, felt unhappy. Excusing herself, and holding her arms beneath the hanging black sleeves, she walked slowly away towards the chapel.

Once out of sight, Sister Sebastian heaved a sigh. Her heavy eyelids dropped, and she paused in the vestry amidst all the altar flowers, and began to think.

She thought of this girl — of Dory O’Moore, scarcely nineteen years of age — thought of her little flower-like face, her small Greek head with the heavy autumn brown hair and her curved mouth that seemed moulded by tenderness itself — and the eyes. Sister Sebastian looked vaguely into the flowers. “Dory’s

eyes are darker than any flowers one ever sees — except purple irises shaded by the great trees after sunset.” She thought of an unconscious way Dory had of laying her long slender hands upon her childish breast, a gesture wistful — alluring. Sister Sebastian turned and looked out of the barred window. She seemed to hear the flute-like voice soaring in the chapel. She saw Dory’s face and the wonderful way it was transformed into something almost supernatural with the ecstasy of music. “Her voice is like a violin with a human heart,” thought Sister Sebastian, “— but to earn her living by it?” There was no possibility of opera. The voice was not big enough. Comic opera? Concert? She only knew the road would be hard for this child to travel and tears welled up in her throat. For when she had been very young — but as the memory came back, she turned quite pale and passed into the chapel to pray.

In the library of a New York apartment on Madison Avenue, Mrs. Sand stared at Harry Balster as she smoked a cigarette and Harry stared at Bella as he smoked a cigar.

“Well,” said he, “certainly seems funny — you being the mother of young lady!”

Bella not only looked guilty, she *felt* like a criminal! Even in the sunlight a line could not be detected in her face, and her figure was slender and lithe as a young boy’s. She tried to laugh lightly now as she

said, "Yes, — yes, it seems impossible my baby is eighteen — a — quite a — debutante! "

Bella raised her trained eyebrows and vainly tried to look unconcerned. She added — "Heigho — *dear* me — to *think* if her father were alive now, Zoe would be a 'Debbie' in the very best set this year! "

Harry took an especially deliberate puff of his cigar, and responded, "Well, since he hasn't been on the scene for fifteen years to my knowledge, the set of hams she'll meet around here will be adequate to start her in her mother's footsteps. Your parlor snakes will think you've been holding back on them when they see your Baby Zoe! "

Mrs. Sand did not exactly answer that, but suavely remarked, "They will not only see Zoe, but she is going to bring her best friend with her, — a charming girl. You remember Dory O'Moore? "

This high "company manner" could usually be counted on to a little awe Harry and Mrs. Sand did not want too much frankness just now.

Harry's answering grunt was not exactly awed this time, but at least he was enough quelled to drop a discussion that might have led him into tasteless arithmetic as to Zoe's mother's age.

CHAPTER III

NEXT DAY

SUNSET light was streaming through the windows of the bare recreation room. The girls were all playing, as the clock struck five and Dory nudged her friend's arm and whispered:

"I've got to go and see The Directress; I am to be in the office at five minutes past five." The Reverend Mother received only on rare and important occasions. So Zoe was immediately interested.

"Whatever do you suppose this is for," inquired Zoe.

"Oh, I suppose just to say good-bye and give me my money. Sister Sebastian said I had \$500.00, you know."

"Oooh!" breathed Zoe in ecstasy. "You can spend it all on clothes."

"And perfume," added Dory breathlessly as they both began running to the door. "Violet perfume — such as you had on your handkerchief. I'll put it on my hair — so it will be the last thing I'll smell at night before going to sleep."

"Oh, I like Eastern perfume — the kind that Mother has," said Zoe, as they ran up the long hall towards the monastery. "They make you nearly faint they're so wonderful. Men love that kind," she whispered mysteriously. "They say —"

"Is my hair neat?" demanded Dory abruptly as they stood outside the gigantic Gothic door of the office.

Zoe brushed it a little with her hand, kissed her and tiptoed away.

Trembling with excitement of the unknown, Dory knocked and the unfamiliar old voice said, "Come in."

The Directress sat immobily, the huge Gothic desk surrounding her, her broad back against the dark wall. Her colorless eyes were unnaturally large and her tight head band seemed to draw them painfully up. A large rheumatically bent finger pointed to a chair at the other side of the desk and the thin lips smiled a sad but very kindly smile. And her voice — a curious veiled monotone — seemed like a voice from the beyond.

"My child," she began, "your school days are over and you are at liberty to leave us — if you choose."

Dory felt for her handkerchief.

"You are at liberty to go out into an utterly unknown place to you. To all the darkness and the little light which it contains." She paused and fingered her silver crucifix. "But you have had many happy years here with us who love you — have you not, Dory?"

"Yes — I —"

"Dear child, there is a home and protection always within these walls for you, if you wish to remain."

"Thank you," said Dory in a tiny voice. "But

I — I'm — I'm afraid I can't thank you just the same. . . ."

"Perhaps it would be wise to stop with us a little while longer, at least," came the quiet old voice — which seemed to measure each word.

"I don't know," came the still tinier voice of Dory.

"Do you wish very much to go out into a cruel world — the evils of which you know not, dear? I call you to me this evening because I saw and heard you sing and you seem to be made not for material things, my dear child."

"Thanks, I hope I shall — shall be worthy of your — your kind thought," said Dory — then digging her nails so deeply into her tender palms that it hurt, she began, "I think I will overcome evil. I have spent many hours in chapel praying God to help me — because the world, although — I don't know it well, is very dear to me and the people and all are dear to me, so I look forward to being in it and trying to be good myself, and to being good to other people — to helping them in some way — and I've prayed God to give my body some terrible punishment which I'd try to bear — if I should soil my soul with sin."

And Dory being an extremist in all things had really done this in all sincerity. The stoical expression of the Directress was in sharp contrast to Dory's, who was now trembling from head to foot. The two women looked at each other silently. To each the other was an unsolvable enigma. The Directress selected one of the large keys from a chain on her

belt, and slowly opened the bottom drawer of her desk. Then with a kind of hollow clatter she drew out a large envelope.

“My child, I can tell you in no better way of the dreadful world than by reading your mother’s life, written to me in a letter by your dear departed grandmother.” The old woman put on some horn-rimmed glasses. Then glancing over them she saw that Dory’s eyes were strangely brilliant and her hands were clasped together convulsively. “Er — you remember your mother, dear child?”

“Yes, I was seven years old when she died — I remember.”

“Prove that you have learned the great lesson of self-control by listening very quietly.”

Then the Superior glanced over the letter, placed her large dominant forefinger at the top of one page, and the low, monotonous voice began:

“The sad chapter of poor Doreen’s life is over. It held all the misery you feared the world would bring her and more than you in your life of grace can conceive. Of course they were infinitely happy while Barry was well. But when he failed in all his investments his health broke down, and finally in destitution Doreen was forced to find some way to earn their living, and so she went on the concert stage. Poor Barry survived a very short time. It was pitiful — his end. My child was broken in spirit, but there was little Dory, and there was the necessity of money. Hence the brilliant theatrical career of

which you so strongly disapproved. But I assure you there was no sinful gaiety attached to it — though it was surrounded with vice which had to be evaded. You will forgive me if I say that the typical Irish woman that Doreen was, has modesty and virtue bred in her bone. She withstands temptation as my daughter did, for honor was to her the priceless possession. Our acquaintances were numbered in the thousands, and there were few friends but those were loyal and very near to us. There was one — a young man, who was a great consolation. He too was in trouble, poor boy. There had been a girl to whom he had been devoted — but his family objected and forbade the marriage. It affected her mind and she had killed herself. Doreen reminded him of her and he came to us very often. At those times my daughter would sing simple songs — I can hear her now, her voice expressing the sweetness of her nature, and tears would come to her eyes. For at those times her heart spoke and told us of her own sorrow. She was always very quiet, — after those songs — sat in a way she had, her head on her hand, like a tired bird who after spreading its wings and soaring away to the skies, singing in ecstasy, had fallen back to earth when the song ended. Felix Strange would hold little Dory in his lap, and tell her stories, and he would tell us stories too of his own social world which seemed just as wonderful and fantastic. I want little Dory to know him when she goes forth into the world.

“ Dear Reverend Mother, — things went fairly well

for a few years — but there came a time when Doreen became thin and colorless from overwork. We all begged her to rest and she consented. But the manager persuaded her to appear in a last opera which had been written especially for her. There came the opening night. Even through the golden wig and paint she looked ill. I begged her not to go on. But the manager declared she must just for that once. Doreen assured me that if her little girl were allowed to sit in the wings, she could go through the performance; and she did.

“She sang superbly. There came encore after encore. At the end of the third act there was a torrent of applause. The hard old manager and all the company were affected. Doreen sat holding her child until it was time to go on again. Then, with the first note, the hemorrhage came in one fierce pang of pain! Oh, my friend, it was the end. I remember hearing the doctor saying bitterly to the manager — ‘I told you — she needed rest — I told you, but you insisted. She sang but she sang with her heart’s blood tonight! Yes, she sang with her heart’s blood.’

“Ah, it is hard to believe that my child is dead. I sit with dry eyes gazing into space, the tears scalding my throat — I sit, praying God to have mercy on us all. The only sunshine in my life is little Dory. You must send her to me once a week while I live. I shall stay just near. A tiny income left by my brother supports me, but Doreen leaves enough for Baby’s education. I place all in your hands. You

are the only person to whom I have written at such length — you whose place in the world has always been a comforter of troubled souls. I hope we may soon meet, dear friend of mine. With affectionate thoughts,

“ Always sincerely,

“ Mildred Shawn.”

The Superior had read quietly, continuously, and hearing no sound from the girl, was pleased at her control. But when the letter had been carefully folded and placed in the envelope, her glasses placed in their case, she looked and saw that Dory was sitting quite rigid, her eyes glassy as if she were turned to stone. This transformed the Superior into her real self, for in a moment she had the girl in her great arms holding the little head in her ample breast and rocking her to and fro. “ There, there — ” she cooed and the flood-gates were opened. A wild sob shook the rounded body and left it shivering like an aspen leaf. The sympathetic old woman drew out an enormous linen handkerchief, wiped the pretty eyes and kissed each cheek.

“ Now, child, go and see your friend Zoe, and then spend an hour in Meditation, quite alone, it will be good for soul and body.” Immediately becoming the Superior again, she added in a low chant-like voice, “ While you are alone, my child, reflect on the treachery and cruelty which impregnates the life beyond these walls — hearts are lacerated — souls are lost.

Meditate upon the iniquitous world that broke your mother's heart. You are so young I don't like to think of your going out without protection. God will call you to us — to celibacy — and happiness."

All night long the girl wept bitterly — her hand ever seeking a little statuette beneath her pillow. Of that figurine you shall hear presently. And when Zoe Sand peeked in at her through the starched white curtains, she pretended to be asleep. For no human being could console or understand. All night long she suffered while she lived over and over what her mother must have suffered.

But never once did she consider staying in the convent. For her heart was hungry — starving for love. She knew that the kindly but placid Directress could not understand. Her father and mother had tasted happiness together. The unemotional old woman could not comprehend that her mother had lived that happiness over and over until the end; and had died looking forward to a reunion in another world. With the intuition of all sensitives she divined that life had not been all cruel to those ill-fated lovers and, towards morning, her eyes became heavy and drowsy as a veil was lifted from them and she saw the slender form of her mother standing close to her, and a radiance filled the little room. Softly she touched her mother's long brown hair and lo! as she did so the arms of the lovely woman became outstretched wings and her delicate feet left the floor. Although she was divinely beautiful, this metamorphosis fright-

ened Dory and she fell on her knees and clasped her hands in prayer.

“Mother have mercy upon me! Advise me what to do!”

And her answer floated to Dory like a song wafted upon moonbeams —

“Doreen, it is too late for us both to lament your lack of vocational training. Try to do the best you can. Be brave, courageous; every day attain a little knowledge, for knowledge is power.” Slowly she ascended towards the silvery light in the ceiling; her sweet face expressed heavenly love for her child, and she called, “We know that knowledge is invisible wings for mortals.”

“Oh, pray that I shall one day have invisible wings!” Dory cried as the apparition disappeared and she awakened to find herself still kneeling on the hard cold floor — her hands clasped in prayer.

CHAPTER IV

BLUE and gold was the sky next day and huge decorative clouds rose one upon the other in soft colors as does melody upon melody in some operas. The sun showed itself after many days of hiding, and for the sun it is not difficult to dry the eyes of one sad girl.

Doreen lifted her aching head from the pillow and smiled at the thought of going out into the world, going to meet life.

Of course for the next day or so there were sudden floods of tears that stuck in her throat now and then — but between times there was much packing and rummaging and getting things together.

“Whose are those,” demanded Zoe Sand, popping her head up out of the depths of a clothes sheet and holding out a white object.

“Mine,” answered Dory, popping her head up.

“Awful coarse old things,” remarked Zoe, “throw them out, dear — we’ll wear nothing but silk ones now, like Mother.”

But Dory recognized a piece of lace her grandmother had crocheted on “them,” and smoothed them in her trunk, saying, “Does your mother wear silk ones all the time?”

“Sure,” answered the excited Zoe, — then pausing for a moment to rest and reminisce on Dory’s one

time in the world — the unforgettable occasion when she visited someone besides her grandmother, Zoe began —

“ Say, Dory, do you remember that time you were visiting at my house in New York when we were about thirteen years old, and we dressed all up in Mother’s afternoon gowns and silk stockings and slippers, and big picture hat, and put Mother’s paint on our faces . . . ”

“ Yes,” added Dory, her eyes brilliant as she sat down to rest. “ And we went for a quiet nonchalant stroll on Riverside Drive — as it were — and I felt a crowd gathering in back of us and we just suspected it might be we — so we glanced back and there we were daintily holding our skirts up above our knees — nearly to our necks in the back! ” their laughter pealed at this. “ Then,” giggled Dory, hugging her knees as usual when delighted, “ what did we do but gather them up on all sides and run for our lives up the street to the house. Oh — will I ever forget my feeling when we saw your mother in the doorway! And your uncle! ”

“ Oh,” laughed Zoe, “ dear old Uncle Frank would never say a word to us — but my other uncle — this one who lives with us now — Uncle Harry! ” — Zoe’s black eyes sought the heavens for comprehension.

“ Oh, have you two uncles? ” asked Dory, — feeling a great interest in all the family affairs now that she was to become part of it.

“ Oh, yes,” said Zoe. “ But Uncle Frank who used

to live with us before this uncle — he's gone now — lives in Europe or somewhere. We can paint our faces as much as we please now," Zoe went on, "and there'll be nothing but chiffon skirts and we'll know how to wear them too! "

"Yes," laughed Dory — "you have what they call chic, Zoe! "

"Well," responded the flattered Zoe, "I've heard Mommie say she'd rather see a woman have 'chic' than virtue! "

There was a soft footstep outside.

"Who was that?" whispered Zoe — "Was that Sister Sebastian who just slunk by? "

"Oh, I don't think so — she's not sneaky," said Dory, her heart fluttering in her throat.

Zoe peeked out of the door cautiously, and looked up and down the corridor that ran past the "wardrobe room." "There she is, sitting up at the end like a nasty old Sphinx," announced Zoe. "I'll bet she's been listening to everything. She's sitting up there now with a smirk on her like a slit in a tomato can."

A faint rustle was heard. Zoe flew back to the chest and Sister Sebastian appeared in the doorway. She looked strangely pale. "Is there something I can do for you children? "

"No," said Zoe, mellifluently. "I only looked out at you, dear, because we are going so soon and there won't be many chances to see that wonderful 'Mona

Lisa ' smile of yours," and Zoe kissed her on each passive cheek.

Dory said nothing, but she saw that their teacher's eyes looked troubled and she felt depressed as always when Zoe did this sort of thing.

Sister Sebastian returned to her post.

Zoe stood with her teeth clenched like a beautiful young fury.

Enfolding her in strong arms Dory pressed her cheek tightly against her hair and breathed a silent prayer. "Dear Lord, I realize that we all have a baser self. It's hard sometimes for me to rise above mine, but please protect Zoe against hers. Amen."

CHAPTER V

A LOUIS XV clock pointed to half past four. The two girls had arrived at midday in New York from Chateauden. Not having slept at all the night before from the excitement, they had been sent to their rooms after luncheon for a little siesta before dinner. "You will be called at five," Mrs. Sand had said, but uncalled Dory had awakened on the moment. A very soft quilt caressed her cheek, it was of a deep rose-colored silk. Dory patted it vaguely, then became conscious of the exquisite linen of the bed. She buried her face in the soft embroidered pillow and felt for the statuette. "Dearest," she breathed to it, "this is the dream world come true." Her face flushed by a deep sleep, she sat up in bed and rubbed her eyes like a big baby and looked around. "It's the dream all right enough," she said half aloud, and pounced out of bed on to the great white bear rug.

The walls of the room were paneled in pale grey wood. On one side there were three long mirrors reaching to the ceiling. Each had a little ivory knob. The girl examined them. Lo! out came the mirrors and there appeared all sorts of drawers and clothes racks, and Dory saw herself on all sides to her immense delight. She made a kind of Princess dress

out of her nightgown with one hand and held her auburn curls high on her head with the other. The effect was ravishing. Dory viewed with no little pleasure the pretty curve at the back of her neck and the tiny curls that clung to it. Her slender form was shown to full advantage. Pirouetting and curtsying she hummed a gay tune while she danced a minuet, ending by hanging the rose-silk quilt in long folds around her shoulders, and taking her steps with an eye on her train. "Some day I shall have a coat of this color," thought Dory, and then looked around for more treasures. There were many beautiful grey chairs all of which were tried and found worthy of this new world.

What a dressing table! Indeed never had she dreamed so wonderful a dressing table as that between the long windows. It was small and had frivolous legs that curved beneath the weight of the golden treasure it bore, and it wore an antique cover of Flanders lace, and its mirror was heart-shaped. At either side like two crystal sentinels guarding the precious gold toilet set, were tall cut-glass candlesticks topped by creamy shades. There were many rose-colored curtains which reached from the sky-painted ceiling to the carpet. Doreen parted one pair and found herself in her bathroom. She fairly purred with delight. It had soft green lattice work on the walls upon which English ivy grew. Dory folded her arms and gazed with unbelieving eyes at the sunken bath tub of green tiles, at the quaintly decorated ceil-

ing and all the bottles upon crystal shelves. Embroidered towels hung upon silver rails. Dory put out her hand to touch one of them. "Silk towels, I suppose, — nothing less," she whispered, — but investigation proved they were linen, and warm! The silver rods were burning! At this marvel of ingeniousness, she played a silent tune with her finger-tips on her lips. "And everything here is warm and beautiful and cosy like those towels. This is the kind of place I should like — when I — Marry." Her eyes grew soft. She sat down on the little lounge and hypothecated her lover.

Still in her dream, she arose and glanced at herself in a mirror. She saw a fascinating carved knob just above the tub. Her finger reached out to touch it. There might be more wonders disclosed. It turned. Down poured a fountain of cold water all over the pretty gown, drenching her completely. And like Eve she was sorry she had looked for more treasures. Her heart stood still. The bathroom would be ruined! An unconscious hand on a button brought help.

Tap — tap at the door.

"Oooo — come in," cried Dory.

Tap — tap again.

"Come in," cried the girl.

Bangs, the English butler, entered respectfully, in full regimentals, bearing a tray and a small glass of some amber-colored liquid.

"Oooo — " cried Dory. "I thought — please go out — "

Bangs clapped his hand over his mouth and retreated.

“Dory,” called the voice of Zoe.

“Oh, come quick.”

Zoe appeared in a peach-colored Oriental kimono.
“Whatever is the matter, you folly —”

“I’m drenched — O, Zoe, fix that fountain, it will run over everything — who was that just came in here — Oooo, I was — my nightie was — I —”

This brought one of those crescendo laughs from Zoe, which the Nuns always begged her to control. Full vent was given to it now, while Dory donned a dry nightie. Zoe explained Bangs the butler and then began to laugh again so loudly that her shouts brought Mrs. Sand.

With long undulating movements the slim silken gowned woman came in and sat beside the bed, while Zoe at the top of her voice related the Bangs incident.

“That is droll,” said her mother. “She’s like a cunning baby. Better jump in bed for a moment, dear, and get warm.” And bending over she took the rose silk quilt and covered Dory very tenderly.

To Dory, the latest and most astonishing object of Art in the place was Mrs. Sand. She looked exactly like Zoe, and almost as young, except in certain lights! But even now one of those cruel lights stood in judgment. The blue black hair was arranged severely and close to the small shapely head. But the roots showed white here and there, at the part. The marble skin of the beautiful Bella Sand now looked a

little wrinkled and lavender beneath the pink powder. Her large mouth had more form than Zoe's, because she painted it in a Cupid's bow. She had the same nose over which the skin was drawn a little more tightly and the same kind of large teeth which showed too prominently when she laughed. When she looked out beneath half-closed blackened lashes those strong teeth seemed to make even her soft black eyes metallic.

"Well, dear," said Mrs. Sand in her soft studied voice, "do you think you will be happy to lead a quiet life here with Zoe and the maid for a year?"

"Happy! I'll be eternally grateful . . ."

Mrs. Sand laid her thin, deeply-veined hand upon the girl's soft one. "I am very fond of you, Dory, you must think of this house as your home."

"I'm fond of you, too," said Dory very truthfully.

After the two had gone to dress, Dory wished ardently that Mrs. Sand would not call attention to that deeply-veined hand by covering it with so many diamond rings.

CHAPTER VI

AT half past eight that night the family sat down to dinner. Dory had been presented to Mr. Balster, "Uncle Harry," who now occupied the seat at the head of the huge round lace-covered table. Rose lights dissolved the tapestry hung walls into Rembrandt shadows, showed the design of the rich silver and glass on the table, and accentuated the curious exotic beauty of Mrs. Sand.

Zoe was pale and wild-eyed and very loquacious. Dory was slightly flushed and very silent. Like a frightened bird her heart fluttered about her breast.

While Zoe chattered, strange glances were exchanged between Mrs. Sand, as her black slanting eyes looked over her thin-stemmed wine glass, and "Uncle Harry," who ate ravenously for a long time.

"Ha!" he breathed as the last course was carried out. "I've been away from the good old States for a year and I've been hungry — you can bet, for good old American cooking. I tell you, Bella, you don't get this over in France."

"That's strange," laughed Mrs. Sand. "It is well that I am going with you next time. I'll show you the real restaurants. Antoine, our chef here, is French you know."

“Oui — that’s one on you, Uncle Harry,” cried Zoe, delighted that conversation had begun, and she waved her fingers under his nose.

“Well,” drawled Uncle Harry, “as long as Dory likes it, it’s all right — do you like it, Dory?” Leaning over, he laid his large heavy hand on Dory’s arm.

The familiarity dyed her neck and face a deep rose.

“Oh, you folly,” laughed Zoe. “Look at you blush.”

“You don’t mind if I call you Dory?” ventured Uncle Harry pretending to cry with elephantine playfulness.

“Since she is a young lady now, it might be better to call her Miss O’Moore just yet,” ventured Mrs. Sand. And back of the slow warm voice, an icy wave seemed to chill the room.

“You keep out of this, Bella,” roared Uncle Harry as he sprang back — “did I ask you?”

“Oh, my dear boy, I was only joking, now don’t be cross.”

“Regular Mrs. Buttinsky,” returned Uncle Harry resuming his ponderous gaiety.

Uncle Harry had been cross to her beautiful benefactress and Dory disliked him now, and knew she always would.

Coffee was served by the patronizing butler, in tiny Dresden cups. Mrs. Sand placed a cigarette between her large scarlet lips, and the thin blue smoke rising before the dark fire of her eyes, reminded Dory of the incense rising before the light of the heathen god which

was in the smoking-room downstairs. She had never seen a woman smoke before. Mrs. Sand made it seem evil in a beautiful, mysterious way.

Opposite, smoking a large cigar, sat Uncle Harry. What a picture of arrogant selfishness he was! Scant light hair victoriously covered his large round head. "Victoriously" because Andre the valet was proud of his achievement in making it suffice. Proud also was Andre of the rather high collars — made possible by daily massage and constant reminding — "Keep the chin well up, sir" — like silken down were the light eyebrows that formed a white line on the flushed bulging forehead and like white silk fringe were the eyelashes that failed to shade the China blue eyes. The nose was a piece of well-kept flesh, put carefully in just the proper place, three round pleats making the nostrils heavy and large. Andre assured him the large freckles on his forehead came from a torpid liver and nothing would eradicate them save exercise or diet. So Uncle Harry retained the freckles. The mouth was sensual in repose, and dropped pathetically into the well-trained chin as does that of a French bull-dog. But it was not often in repose. For it moved along with his selfish thoughts, puckering and twisting itself to the sides. When he laughed, strange to say, he was immediately transformed. For then his strong white teeth showed themselves and Harry Balster looked like a freckled-faced fat boy. Not that a freckled-faced fat boy is a particularly attractive object, but as such Uncle Harry was certainly im-

proved, and Mrs. Sand found great consolation in the transformation.

The butler poured some cognac for Mr. Balster, who raised it to his lips and again fell to studying Mrs. Sand as she leaned across the table. Is there anything more maddening than the steady stare of a mute questioner? He always wore the same expression when he thought most profoundly — an expression of blankness. One sees it on certain gentlemen as they look out of their club windows. As the French say, so the cow watches the passing train!

Bella Sand twitched her feet uncomfortably as she smiled gaily in answer to some trivial question of Zoe's.

Uncle Harry glanced at Dory. Stared at her in gloating admiration. The lights in her agate brown eyes were intensified by the black lashes which grew unusually long on the lower lid. If one scrutinized as Uncle Harry did now, one perceived that those strange eyes were not exactly alike, one was slightly different in form from the other, but this defect was an added charm and seemed to emphasize the wistful femininity of the tender face. He glanced approvingly at the sensitive rose-colored mouth, and dilated his thick nostrils as he breathed in the fresh perfume of youth which clung about her.

Another long puff at the cigar. "Bella was a good-looking woman in the old days," he thought. "Even when I met her twelve years ago and right up to a couple of years ago there was none better than Bella."

Then too, he realized and appreciated that it had been Bella who had made him presentable. Coming from the West at the age of thirty, he looked like a comic supplement. He was the loud-plaid, brown derby, diamond ring kind, with a fat cigar in his mouth. Balster and his father made their fortune manufacturing artificial flowers. Their factories were well known in the West, their machines turned out flowers by the millions, and most of the work was done by children. Harry Balster fattened on child labor and congratulated himself on the small wages paid his employees most of whom were between the age of fourteen and sixteen.

"I have invited some people in tonight to celebrate your home-coming," came the soft voice of Mrs. Sand. Her chair was drawn back by Bangs, and they all rose. "I hope you are pleased, dear?"

"Oh — a party!" cried Zoe.

"Yes, — an evening with music. Jules Blenner will play. This is a great treat."

"Well, there'll soon be another party in honor of my going away," said Mr. Balster as significantly as possible.

"Yes, *OUR* going away," added Mrs. Sand sweetly.

There was no answer from Uncle Harry and they all passed into the salon.

"Don't you like parties?" demanded Zoe of her purple-faced uncle.

"Yes, surely," said he. "I'll brighten up in a little while, don't you worry. And I say," turning to Mrs.

Sand, "now that Zoe is a young lady I think she may as well call me Harry — don't you think so, Bella?"

Mrs. Sand raised her eyebrows, but as he was about to speak she acquiesced quickly: "Why, yes — I should think so."

"Oh, that seems funny," laughed Zoe.

"Well, that is what you are to do now, my dear, since Harry wishes it," replied her mother with sweet sternness.

The bell was heard dimly.

"I think that is Silvia's voice," said Mrs. Sand.

"Ha, we're off!" cried Harry, jumping up.

Mrs. Sand ran to him. "You are so handsome to-night," she whispered as she fingered a carnation in his buttonhole. While she arranged it, Harry Balster looked over her shoulder at Dory.

"Ah," cried Mrs. Sand — "you are wonderful looking when you smile like that." She fussed with the carnation but Balster still looked over her shoulder at Dory who was sorting some music.

Doreen's white silk dress fell in fine sculptural folds about her. She looked like a marble statue of girlhood, in all its wistful purity.

"Mrs. Van Twiller," announced Bangs. There was a faint rustle — then — two palpitating bosoms appeared over a black jet dress, and a mouth painted clown-red was all that could be seen under a huge black hat.

"My dear Silvia," cried Mrs. Sand. "So glad —

this is my little daughter Zoe — you remember, and Miss O'Moore."

The girls stood near Mrs. Sand while more vivid people were introduced.

As Dory explained to Zoe afterwards, "My ears were run out at the conversation all around me." Mrs. Van Twiller and Mr. Balster stood just back of her, as the people came in. "You heard that story of ——" said Silvia.

"Oh, yes — yes," Harry answered. "Everybody seems to come to it these days — what did they charge him with — er — ah —"

"Oh, no," said she, comprehending, and then whispered something in his ear.

"Haw! Haw!" roared Harry. "Oh, Silvia, you are a wag! It's good to see you again — one doesn't get the good old American wit over there in France. They have no sense of humor in France."

"Why, I didn't know you spoke French very fluently," replied Mrs. Van Twiller. "Do you?"

"Oh no — not fluently — in fact, I don't understand their damned old language at all."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed she. "But you are sure they have no sense of humor, anyway!"

The pleasant voice of a gentleman interrupted. "What did you say is the name of your guest, Harry?"

"O'Moore, Doreen O'Moore — just from the seminary my boy," gurgled Harry, much as one speaks of a fresh egg at midwinter, in the city.

“Present me, will you? Mrs. Sand forgot to in the rush.”

“We-ell,” drawled Balster, “you want to be presented, do you, Felix — some peach, what — well, you’re the kind of handsome gadabout I want to keep away from her. You’re a fine gink to know a — ”

“Oh, I say.”

“You know,” interjected Mrs. Van Twiller, “Felix has well earned the reputation he has that every girl in town . . .”

“Well,” said Balster, putting his stubby arm around the square lean shoulders, “just don’t use the fatal charms here — now promise.”

“Miss O’Moore, may I present Mr. Strange — now,” added the gay host . . . “remember, Felix . . .” he winked and waved a large finger of warning. When a person of elemental mind is also vulgar, he is the lowest form of human animal, no matter what his caste.

“Shall we go and sit down over there and watch the passing crowd?” said Felix Strange.

The maze of people, the gayety, had gone to the girl’s head like champagne, but the vulgar element depressed, perplexed her, and now this meeting with this Felix Strange brought a different breath. She felt herself being propped by pillows, in an inoffensive way — nay, charming way. Somehow thought of Mr. Balster made her like this man. His virile tapering hands — she saw them place a little footstool for her. The dark head was superbly set on fine shoulders.

He had a small black mustache and grey-blue eyes with dark shadows that enhanced their charm. And when he smiled she did not feel embarrassed as she did with Mr. Balster. "Maybe it is *my* Felix Strange," thought Dory with a throb of emotion, "the one Grandma spoke about in her letters to the Reverend Mother." He seemed made for these exquisite surroundings while Mr. Balster seemed like a bull in a china shop. "Oh, I wonder," she began in a quivering little voice.

For some reason, Dory felt that if this were not her "Felix Strange," she would burst into tears. "Please tell me," she said quickly, a great pleading in her voice, "are you *my* — are you Mr. Felix Strange that knew m-my mother — my mother was Mrs. Barry O'Moore."

"Yes, Dory, I am he! "

Dory's eyes widened, she scarcely believed it for a moment, he was so calm.

"You doubt it, little Dory? "

"Oh, no — only you seem so — not so — glad! "

"We mustn't have any scenes here, Dory — just rest quietly and I will tell you stories as of old — only true stories — you must lunch with me to-morrow," he said quietly, "without fail and we'll have a *real* talk — you were Zoe's chum and now are visiting her — since school is over; is that it? "

"Yes," gasped Dory wonderingly. There seemed some complex here she did not understand.

"Dear me," sighed Felix Strange, apparently ignor-

ing Dory's excitement, "there's a funny crowd here tonight." He seemed to settle back within his chair so comfortably that Dory felt herself settling calmly in hers. He was one of those people who could radiate quiet.

"Wonderful," replied Dory, with a little sigh. She felt soothed and more, she felt safe.

"Well, yes, wonderful in its way," continued he, "one always sees a lot of color at Bella Sand's."

"It's kind of like a fairy gathering. I never dreamed anything so wonderful!"

"Well, yes, Dory — or like a great big Punch and Judy show. See that funny automaton over there — that's Mrs. Van Twiller."

"Who is she?" whispered Dory.

"That's Mrs. Sand's chum. She's an actress — she acts better off the stage than on — she's always pretending she's a lady when off. It's a perfect mania with her."

"But she looks like the deep-eyed villainess," laughed Dory. She was now enjoying herself immensely and so, apparently, was Felix Strange.

"But tell me one thing," begged the girl, "did you know me the minute you saw me?"

"Almost — that is why I came over and took you away. You not only have your mother's face, but her voice — that flavor of the old brogue."

"I feel happy. It is a kind of as-if-I-met-my-father feeling."

"That's nice, Dory. You look younger now than you did when I knew you so many years ago!"

Dory looked as if she were puzzling to understand the joke.

Felix Strange looked around the room and smiled. "Never have I seen anything quite so young as you tonight," he answered gravely.

Dory dismissed that as something she did not have to understand, and felt it her turn to converse.

"Oh, look at the funny short lady over there with the gold hair! She's short-waisted and tight-waisted and then very large right down to her feet — I believe she has melted."

"Ha!" laughed Felix. "She does belong to the melted class."

"Now tell me, who is that little girl with the flaxen curls and red slippers? She looks like a big doll with real eyelashes."

"Now that," answered Felix, "is the melting variety. She's a soubrette with wonderful painted eyelashes. And that hatchet-faced woman with her, is her fond mother." Felix explained that all the best soubrettes had hatchet-faced mothers who chaperoned them at all times except most imperative ones.

Just then a tall thin woman dressed in black, undulated across the room, smoking a cigarette through a long amber holder. "That is Beryl Nickots, a sculptor. She's very famous."

"All her strength seems to have gone to her hair," sighed Dory — "there are piles of it cruelly weighing

down her poor frail body — poor thing, she looks so ill.”

“She’s no poor thing — she’s quite strong,” answered Felix, “but she’s one of those people who think it poetic to look like a dying consumptive. She prefers it.”

The woman felt they were discussing her, so she immediately struck a Botticelli pose, stretching her scrawny neck and coughing a little.

“She’ll come over now,” smiled Felix, “You must tell her she looks deathly pale and ask if she does not want a window open. She will love you for it.”

As they talked on poor Dory began to feel suffocated. This exotic air did not give oxygen enough for — was it her lungs or her mind?

“Oh, my — I feel a sinking feeling,” she suddenly cried. Felix Strange opened the window and fetched some water.

Strange had lived too much to take an innocent look at its face value. He had been talking in a worldly, sophisticated vein to see how Dory would take it. Now as he sat gently fanning the girl’s pale sweet face, he saw with relief that she had recoiled from all this gross Vanity Fair. She was making a brave effort to keep her head above water.. But he feared that this vile vortex into which she had been thrown would destroy her. He had met Zoe the year before on her vacation and thought her fascinating. But the point now was that to his amazement and horror, he met with her, the daughter of Mrs. Barry O’Moore.

It was as if he had met his own child in this house. He thought of the unforgettable time during which he had known Dory's Mother, thought of the genuine admiration he had had for that woman, and of the sympathy and help she had given him in a time of sorrow. She and Barry had opened the doors of their home to him, and it was the only home he had ever known. For the one he had grown up in was merely a house, — a very smart town and a country home. And his mother? His mother was an elegantly dressed person who came to see him — her only son, at a certain time every day. Her chief pleasure was in reading under a picture in the society sheet — "The most stunning woman at the opera was Mrs. Cyril Strange."

When his father died and left him millions, he was naturally considered a great catch. And his own mother, and all his friends' mothers had combined in pleading with him not to drive the family name in the dirt by marrying the charming poor girl of his choice. It was only after her suicide that he realized he had proven himself a weakling and a cad. He had let happiness sift through his fingers, and now his tragic life was comforted by Doreen O'Moore. It was she who encouraged him in his career as a magazine owner, it was Doreen who had named the magazine which had since proved, as she said it would, an object in life for him, and a force in the world of literature.

Some years after Mrs. O'Moore's death, Felix Strange married the daughter of an old family, as dis-

tinguished as his own, and everybody was content. At a time of loneliness he and Margot Strange were thrown much together through a Newport season, and she knew precisely what she wanted. Before the summer was over, everyone had them engaged. Before the winter was over they had been constantly fêted and dined, and finally, amidst barbaric ceremony and grandeur, they had been married.

Margot Strange assured her husband she was happy, though he marvelled how she could be. Nevertheless she really was, for was she not now the entire mistress of herself and of a smart town and country house? She took a passionate active interest in anti-suffrage, surrounded herself with the adulation of society's rich dilettantes and no watchful eye of a chaperon was necessary. Felix loathed all this triviality. Margot scoffed at the idea of children, home — at everything simple or normal, at all that Felix craved. "You are so magnificently equipped for child-bearing by nature," he pleaded. But Margot had stubbornly pursued her artificial life. Felix was forced to bow his head to her will. And though they appeared properly attentive to each other when he accompanied her at such important functions as weddings, christenings, dog-shows and funerals, their paths steadily diverged.

How often does the dance of society's best butterflies begin with the gracious low bow. The steps are very pretty at first, then the pair keep further and further apart; when the parting is made final and complete, the newspapers flagrantly give all the de-

tails to a public that is always interested though it seldom applauds.

After his marriage Felix became more engrossed in his magazine than ever. He became a munificent patron of the Arts. And he also became devoted to a *declass  * set of questionable or "unquestionable" Bohemians. Their frank vulgarity amused him. Bella Sand was the centre of a would-be smart, very fast set. And for years Felix Strange had been an habitue at her salon. Hence his appearance to-night. He had often thought of the noble Doreen O'Moore, who had died in so tragic a way, and wondered what had become of her child, little Dory.

Now that he had found her, he wished that he might carry her bodily out of the place that night. But he realized that he had taken a great deal to drink at dinner and be it said that drink was getting a stronger hold on him every year. He concluded he would be more competent in the morning. Then he would inquire into Dory's finances and make all necessary arrangements for her immediate departure and permanent protection, and so return in part the tender kindness of her mother and grandmother to himself in the long ago when he was so nearly crushed to death.

"There, there, Dory, you must enjoy the Punch and Judy show," he said at last, still waving the fan gently. "I am right here with you, just as in the old days when I used to hold you high up at the Gignol. See, over there, the funny purple-faced old doll with

the flaring white whiskers. He's trained to be a lawyer and sometimes goes through his part very well and lots of gold is put in his little pockets. It enables him to support that overdressed lady by his side — the lady who is overflowing her gown, — what do you think of her?"

Dory was reassured and laughed. "She looks as if she would

‘Burst from her shell

With a horrible yell . . .’

as the song goes."

In his dulled brain Felix resolved that his first act of protection must be to prepare her for learning later "what kind of a crowd she was in." So he called her attention to a stalky little man with black patent-leather hair, a round face, and a frilled shirt-front.

"Ugh! he's horrid," ejaculated Dory. "I'm sure he is talking about himself to those pretty women in the corner. He'd have to take the part of Humpty-Dumpty — the hard boiled egg in our Gignol" . . . there came a twinkle in her Irish eyes . . .

"Humpty Dumpty sat in the hall,
Humpty Dumpty he had a gall,"
she whispered.

"Why, that is Frank Hilliard," Felix laughed. "He's a nice little fellow . . . he's a thief."

"What! "

"Yes, he was so successful, you see — got such a lot of money — that he's a great pet around town. They whisper sympathetically 'kleptomaniac.' "

"How, — how awful," poor Dory's face clouded again. "Yet God has given him that lovely wife."

"Ah," said Felix wafting the little fan, gently. "The law of compensation always predominates in the end. You see, this way he'll spend all the money — the lovely little wife helping him of course, then he'll start burgling, probably be sent up for several years, come out with spirit broken, and be a pick-pocket. That kind of person never works. You mustn't stare at him that way, Dory, or the Punch and Judy show must close."

Jack Harrington, a newspaper reporter, wandered up. Harrington had been flirting with Zoe and felt with reason that he had gained her affection. He was a well-knit, average-sized brown-haired young man, with a large mouth and narrow grey eyes which sadly needed glasses, but he never wore them except on the end of a very effective broad black ribbon. By profession he was a journalist. He had nothing in the world save charming manners and faultless clothes. He was a great favorite. "You must have a high-ball with me, Felix," he said.

"Not a thing, old man, thanks."

"Oh, yes," insisted Mr. Harrington. He was always most generously hospitable about these matters, when in other people's houses. Especially since prohibition!

"Sh! I have had too much to drink already," whispered Felix solemnly.

“Sh!” mocked Harrington, equally solemnly as he went to pour the drink.

Dory excused herself and went over to talk to Zoe.

And Felix found himself rapidly consuming a cool, refreshing high-ball and then vaguely found himself taking two or three more. All the time Jack Harrington was talking, as Felix put it “ravenously” about the charms of Zoe, and Felix wondered more and more feebly what would become of Dory if he left her here. He was sleeping when Jules Blenner appeared.

Blenner was dark and not tall, about five feet eight. He was slender but not frail looking, though as he stood his shoulders drooped a little and his chest seemed to curve in. But the English tailors approve of this posture for the moment. It is the “smart” way to stand. He wore his clothes with much distinction. His dead mother was a beautiful Levantine with the chiseled distinction so often seen in the features of those old races, and a likeness to her graced her son. Happily for him he inherited neither the dyspeptic stomach of his father nor the grouchy pessimism which generally goes with it. A painter would have seen in young Blenner’s dark ivory skin green shadows, and a sculptor would have enjoyed the subtilty of its modelling. Curly blue black locks were cut close at the back and slicked off the broad forehead. His large wide apart agate brown eyes with their full lids and crescent-shaped brows were the man’s best feature, and expressed what *au fond* he really was — the idealistic artist. But weakness had marked the

mouth and chin and so made one more demi-god of the earth — earthly.

As he stood looking about the room, he rubbed his hands in a way instrumentalists have — and Dory noticed that they were broad and muscular. He bent over to the piano and began to touch the keys vaguely, still looking around the room. He caught the eyes of Dory looking wonderingly at him, and then kept her in view. The lights of the crystal chandelier and its myriad reflections in the mirrors grew fewer. Then someone put them out entirely. To the lights of soft-colored lamps alone Jules Blenner struck the sombre chords of Chopin's Nocturne Opus 1. So sympathetically did he follow his motif through its golden maze that the notes fell like so many warm tears from the heart of the tragic Chopin, like so many sighs of his hopeless sickness — so many pangs of his passionate love. All those restless babbling people of a moment before had paused in their strange race through life. Each one relaxed in a chair, each one gazed into his dreamland — silent shadows let free by starving souls — souls that were now being fed by this magic music.

Swift ominous thoughts came to Dory, but she rose above them. She was a caged bird, set free; she gloried in it and allowed herself to soar, passing those thoughts which were ominous as she flew higher and higher into this new vivid expanse. She would formulate her thoughts after it was over, when she would have had a cozy chat with Zoe, said her prayers and was once more in that pretty grey bed between the

silken sheets. Now she only knew the spell of the music, and the still stronger spell of the brilliant young musician.

Soon it was over. The lights were brightly shining, the people had eaten and drank, and Jules Blenner had chatted with Dory and said good-night, touching the back of her hand with his warm lips — perhaps a moment too long, as he whispered — “I — I played only to you tonight — you made me really play Chopin tonight,” and he passed out of the room. In her happiness, Dory searched for her friend — for Felix Strange, but he had left surreptitiously, having been advised by Jack Harrington that he was not “holding his liquor very well these days.”

Jack had promised to give Dory full directions for the meeting on the morrow; this he did. Jack himself felt happy, for had not the impulsive Zoe yielded to his embraces in a dance — yielded her lips in a long kiss and told him she loved him?

At last Harry Balster’s stentorian voice bade the last person good-night — the last but one. It was Silvia Van Twiller who remained, she wanted to borrow some money. “I have something important to talk over with Bella — do you mind if we retire to her boudoir for a little half hour?” she said.

“Go ahead,” responded Harry.

Zoe laid a hot trembling hand on Dory’s arm. “I’m going to my room, dear,” she whispered, “come in, when you have your kimono on. “There’s lots to tell!”

“ Oh,” cried Harry, “ I seem to be all alone. I think Dory ought to sing me a little song. I’ve never heard Dory sing.”

“ Yes, do,” called out Mrs. Sand, “ go in and sing for him, Dory, if you are not too tired.”

Now if there ever was an inappropriate time for singing — this, in Dory’s mind, was it. She did not like the idea of being left alone with Balster. But they were so kind to her she would go. And while she sang, she would think of the dear eyes of Jules Blenner — and that vague extra moment in which his lips had clung to her hand.

“ I must go to my room,” Zoe said. “ I’ll wait for you, dear! ”

Dory clung to her for a moment then went to do as Mrs. Sand bade her.

Harry Balster lighted one rose-colored light near the piano — leaned back in a large chair, settled his receding chin into his collar, lighted a cigar, and waited while Dory sat at the piano, her hands poised over the keys.

In all his life he had never seen anything more desirable than this girl. But here he was tied by a silent bond to a middle-aged woman. A woman who had subjugated him, by manifesting her superiority. He knew he had not been bred a gentleman, but he hated Bella’s superiority. After all, what was poor Bella Sand now? He’d look nice with a poor old “ gink ” dragging around Europe. But with this girl they would indeed be an attractive pair! He must

have her for his own! Unintelligent as he was, he was conscious of the loyalty and sensitiveness of Dory's nature. He must get her now, before she fell under the spell of Bella. He would marry her. He felt that the time had really come for making his choice. And he had been taught that a rich man could have any poor woman he wanted. A feeling of self-pity swept over him as he thought — "A rich attractive man like myself, not established with a beautiful young wife, a fine house where the 'gentry' would come and a pew in a church where I'd be a pillar!" He had always wanted to be a church pillar. There was something lurid about this surreptitious life he led with Bella. With a grieved expression he said to himself that it did not suit his true nature. He would abandon it all! These thoughts passed through his head as Dory, thinking of her musician, sang simple old songs.

Finally she sighed and rose. "You must be tired of my singing now . . ."

But Harry Balster went over and stood very close to her, breathing heavily.

"Tired of you," he repeated amorously — then drew his breath in between clinched teeth in approved romantic style. — "Oh, Dory," he quivered, "you don't know what you say. For the first time in years my poor heart has been rested."

"Oh, Mr. Balster, are you ill?" The girl tried to say it in a nonchalant way, feeling instinctively that he was growing sentimental. "You don't look it,"

she added nervously. If she might only think of something funny to say. But one's wit — if one possesses that quality — is generally stupefied in such moments of need.

"Doreen," continued her host, "I may not look it — I try not to, but I am sad — my life is wrecked!"

"Oh, now I'm sorry — I am — Mr. Balster." In anger or sympathy or any deep feeling Doreen — as her grandmother used to say, "reverted to type" and dropped into the melodious O'Moore brogue.

"Wrecked — wrecked," he repeated hopelessly, nodding his big head with the weight of the word.

"Is there nothing to be done at all?" ventured Doreen. Then a thought came to her — "Oh, I know you must be unhappy about those poor children working for you in your factory!"

"Well, if that isn't a silly remark for an intelligent girl like you to make. Why, say," he declared in his nasal twang, "listen to statistics: of a group of six thousand two hundred and seventy working children in Chicago, fifty-eight per cent. left school at fourteen years of age — and," he leaned back in his chair for emphasis — "and liked it — preferred it — do you get me? I keep three hundred kids at work in one factory alone. I don't want them until they're fourteen, and say, their parents can hardly wait till they reach that age. Most of 'em, working for me, are between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. They get ideas of higher wages after that and my foremen al-

ways say, 'Try and get it.' If they can so much the better — we always have a waiting list of applicants! ”

He refrained from telling her that there was in his service many a child as young as nine years whose pitiful lies about being a few years older were conscientiously endorsed by the crafty foremen. And also did Harry Balster forget the occasional cruel accidents to these unfortunate children, caused by the machines in his factory. After all, to his superior way of thinking, these cases were something for accident insurance and his clever lawyers to settle.

Visualizing the sad plight of these poor children upon whose labor such creatures as Harry Balster fattened, caused Dory to experience a vague repulsion for this monster and it was concomitant with a strange fear.

He looked at her intensely with half-closed china blue eyes, as he batted the white eyelashes and towered over her — a ludicrous lugubrious giant.

“If I might tell you — confess as it were — that would help, Dory! It is a personal matter that I’m longing to tell you.”

The girl cringed from the familiarity of her name on his lips, and for that matter she cringed from being his confessor. But in the case of human suffering one should give help regardless of the individual. “Oh yes, surely — if you wish,” said she.

“Well, then,” and he began in a solemn voice, “when I was a lad I came to New York, fresh and fine as you are now.” Balster paused, and cast down

his white eyelashes. "I met a woman. Do you know what bad women are, little Doreen?"

"Yes," said Dory frankly. "I've read of them in the Bible and in French novels — I —"

"She was a bad woman," continued Balster, "a bad woman who was magnificently — alluringly dressed and jewelled — just as they are in the novels. She appealed to my fine taste — I am refined — I can't help it — that's the way I am —"

This was Mr. Balster's formula. If anything puzzled — annoyed or amused — he would remark, "I don't understand — I don't like or I like — I can't help it, that's the way I am." This gave him most complete satisfaction and to his mind was a complete philosophy.

He put his cigar on a little ivory tray, and leaned forward — humping his shoulders, putting his elbows on the wide arms of the chair, and clasping his hands — "She made me think she was absolutely necessary to me in this foreign New York — I knew nothing about big cities. When we appeared together in gay restaurants, everybody turned to admire her. She made me proud. For it was I who now paid for all her gowns and jewels. She had been cast off by another man just before I met her, — and the man was right to cast her off —" he added bitterly.

"Oh — now — poor thing," sighed Dory instinctively. "You know, I often feel sorry for bad women. My grandmother always had sympathy for poor Mary

Magdalen — and so have I — and I used to pray to Saint Mary Magdalen — ”

But Harry Balster was taking another dramatic breath in through clinched teeth, and going on with his part. “ The other man had sense enough to see she was false,” he added bitterly, “ but I stepped in like an innocent lamb. And she wasted money wilfully — wantonly — I spent hundreds of thousands on her apartment — all the fast set frequented it. I paid to be dragged to the gutter — to have my health impaired by champagne — a fast set — do you know what that means, Dory? ” he inquired as he leaned eagerly towards her.

“ Oh, yes,” again replied Doreen quickly, hoping to ward off an explanation.

“ It means,” continued Mr. Balster heavily, “ that all the women are high-class prostitutes, — and any women men meet in an apartment of this kind — they consider they are at liberty to treat as such.”

“ Oh, mercy, that’s terrible — it’s like a lion’s den — or — ”

“ Doreen — don’t be frightened,” said he. “ I have lived that life of sin with that awful woman up till tonight — I, Henry Balster, confess to you, poor sweet thing that you are.”

“ But — ” began Dory.

He grasped her hand — “ I confess, the woman is Bella Sand — and this is the apartment.” The girl drew back. She was deathly pale. “ Tonight men looked at you and pitied you — thinking you had

started in a life of shame because you were here — tomorrow they will call — you shall see.”

Dory sprang away but was caught firmly by the frail wrist.

“As you value your honor listen to me — we have only a few minutes — you have awakened me — Doreen — I love you — I can’t see you in this mess — your only chance is to come away with me — I know you have no money — have no protection. I am leaving tomorrow and Mrs. Sand will not have a cent. She has squandered everything.”

“I don’t believe it — I’ll work to help her — I’ll work my hands off! ”

“Come away with me from this mess, Dory, and we’ll lead an honest life, respected by everybody.”

“Let me go,” whispered Doreen. Her throat was parched. She grasped it tightly. “Let me go I say! ”

“Let you go,” whispered Balster — clutching both her hands. “Don’t cry out — you are a sensible girl, let you go into the gutter is what you are asking me. I tell you there’s no chance here, no work in New York for a beautiful girl without money. You are not trained for work — you are up against a stone wall — do you understand? I am a rich man — I desire you — should have you. You must finally relent. It is inevitable. Men will want you — no matter what position you take — they will want you. Not for your breeding, education, voice, bah! They will only want you because you are a beautiful little

animal — with a wonderful mouth. I'm mad about you — mad — mad," he crushed her to him.

Dory felt like a drowning person in his embrace.

"Let me go," she cried, throwing back her head. "Let me go — I don't believe a word you say against Mrs. Sand. Oh! "

"Sh! " said Harry Balster, releasing her and putting an index finger over his mouth he looked cautiously around.

Mrs. Sand stood in the doorway. She went over and took Doreen in her arms, and tenderly led her out of the room. At the door of the bedroom, Mrs. Sand whispered, "Zoe is asleep — say nothing of this to her, dear, go to bed and try to rest," she pressed her arm and looked very sad and very old as she moved away.

Dory turned her lock. Then shivering, she stood in the darkness. Her pretty mouth, now contorted with disgust, felt dry and parched. But she could not moisten it with her tongue — for there was his horrible kiss! The first kiss! that exquisite thing of which she had dreamed! But no, she would simply not allow it the name. Softly she tiptoed to the bathroom, snapped on the light, and putting a little alcohol in water, bathed her lips. Then with cool sweet toilet water, she bathed her pale little face. She peered in the mirror, half expected a repellent sight. For surely it was the face of a deceitful adventuress! She felt it was not right to sing to him.

But then, Mrs. Sand herself had insisted. But looking at the thing in a cold true light, she — Dory O'Moore — willingly or unwillingly — had harmed Mrs. Sand, her best friend's mother — her own benefactress!

Only to see Zoe for a moment! Surely no one needed a friend more than she, just now. And Zoe would be very sympathetic. But Mrs. Sand had asked her not to say anything. She passed into the bedroom, leaving the door half open, and a faint light came into the place. She threw herself down on the bed and with her face in the pillows thought of that lovely mother who had worked for her. Her mother had been forced to take the initiative once. How splendidly she had risen to it. Her daughter would be worthy! Dory straightened and drove back the first tear, which seemed to crystallize in a large painful lump in her throat. She began to think. Softly she tried her door — yes, it was well locked. She arranged her altar in the usual way and on her knees she went into meditation. After waiting some minutes in silence her statuette seemed to give her wisdom. Quite casually the day before she had found a book which looked interesting and she had placed it near her altar. Now she fingered over the pages without really looking at them. But suddenly concentrating she read:

“Through every heart, in spite of its defects and failings, back of the personality which may be obnoxious, beneath and beyond, is the voice of God

speaking. And this voice is the one voice in all, making humanity one.

“Call it by what name you will, it is a voice which speaks where there is none to speak. It is a messenger that comes without form or substance, or it is the flower of the soul that has opened.

“It speaks from the eyes of the weary toiler or from the mouth of the reckless, the profligate, or the fallen sister.

“Back of every manifestation of life on this plane of being stands divinity.”

Dory had religion of her own, which practically consisted of “Harm no human being in thought, word, or deed.” It seemed the conclusion, the epitome of the teachings of that greatest of all teachers, Christ. This little book made an epoch event in her life. It taught her to think for herself. She came to love the mysticism of religion with a new love, a different and greater appreciation. But she thought for herself as she had certainly never been encouraged to do in the seminary.

In her mind marriage seemed the holiest and most natural state for a woman. Dory felt that only a woman that bears a child, fulfills her destiny. A child. Some day she wanted that — wanted to have a little child.

And she wanted to go through life adoring the sun of it — basking in it when it shone. For she realized that happiness is the light of the spirit, and comes from one's own spirit. Dory had worked out a creed

that told her that if she shut happiness out from another only a mockery of its glory would be left her. She believed she had unintentionally stood in the light of Mrs. Sand. She was the more eager to serve her though she knew her own innocence. She whispered, "But oh, God, he is really the giant who is going to ruin them — he meant to do that anyway and I must help. I bear no grudge against him — I will rise above all pettiness." She felt help would not come to her as long as there was enmity in her heart for even Balster. She was not trained in any profession. What to do? She went over to the window and gazed forlornly out. Noiseless automobiles skimmed along the gleaming road. One stopped at a palatial door up the street. Very solicitously a gentleman helped a beautiful cloaked woman up the steps. The first floor became flooded with soft light, behind the brocaded curtains. The door slammed, then their car, snorting a little at first, passed on. Against a crevice in a grand church opposite, a man stood crouching. A policeman passed, swinging his stick. Then a thin woman in shabby clothes turned the corner and, going up, spoke to the man. He embraced her, after talking for some minutes, and then struck her, knocking her to the ground. Under the white lamplight her face seemed young. After a moment she picked herself up, straightened her scrawny feathered hat, and saying something over her shoulder to the man, she walked unsteadily up the street. Then the man, a hollow-chested creature, sunk his hands deep in his

trouser pockets, pulled his cap well over his face, and followed sullenly after her. More autos passed and again the policeman, still swinging his stick, stalked stiffly by. Everything was quiet.

Dory shuddered. She pressed her face against the cool pane, as the pageant of life passed beneath her. Dimly, she imagined herself, a part of a monstrous something grotesquely out of scale with her own littleness. Then more clearly came the thought:

“No, it is I who am out of scale. I must be big enough to face all these conditions. This is a crisis in our lives — the life of poor Mrs. Sand, and Zoe and me.”

Then courage came to Dory. She folded her arms and straightened her young shoulders. With a vague thrill, she was conscious of the strength and freedom of youth. She imagined herself a sculptor who was given pure gold to mould what she would of it. And she would mould womanhood in its true maternal sense. She would be self-supporting, not only a productive human being, but a protecting one. She would start by caring for Mrs. Sand and Zoe. For were not Mrs. Sand and the luxury-loving Zoe to be left destitute? Zoe must be persuaded to go out into the world and earn her own living. She would consult Felix Strange as to the best course of action. He had been like a father to her once, and he would be again.

A flash of pleasure passed over her, as she thought of Jules Blenner knowing Felix. In this way, she would see him often, see him very soon again. A

sudden feeling of tenderness swept over her as she thought of Blenner. Beautiful hopes came and they rested her troubled spirit.

The spell which Jules Blenner had cast! She allowed it to surge over her now, like a warm relaxing shower. Suddenly she winced as she thought of Balster's threat. "Those men will call — you shall see." What if Blenner thought that of her! Not until this moment did her present position — or lack of it — appear in its real light. Ah, if he would only wait until she had seen Felix Strange. Felix would explain. She shrank from the thought of Jules Blenner not respecting her. But she had no desire to control the fascination he exercised over her.

Then abruptly came back the vital question, what should she do at once? It seemed to the girl like an ominous sentinel standing with a ring of keys, before many locked mysterious doors, demanding that she instantly choose the right one, on pain of death. Her conclusion would open one, and she must enter in the dark.

Once more came the passionate regret that as a child she had not been helped to an intelligent use of her talent for music. Even if it had only happened to be an interest in housework — how fortunate she would be now in her hour of need to understand household economy — dietetics — all the things that would make her a skilled worker. "Oh," she cried aloud, if ever I can get my voice heard in this world, I'll shout from the housetops — "Give each child a real

chance in life by giving him or her a trade. Give each child a trade or a profession — parents, guardians, teachers — that is your duty! ”

CHAPTER VII

IT was late when Mrs. Sand arose next morning. After bathing she made up her face, and put on a charming kimono of padded white silk, and passed into her boudoir. The maid came in softly with breakfast in a pretty Dresden service. She glanced at her mistress respectfully, thinking, "My, how haggard she looks!" but saying, "I hope Madame rested well."

Coffee aroused Mrs. Sand from the apathy in which she had lain all night and she began to think. Similar scenes to that of the previous night had taken place between her pretty friends and Balster before. She had always pretended not to know of any affair. But in a clever way, she had disgusted Harry with whatever lady he admired and successfully brought him to her own feet in a more grovelling state than ever. He was like an easily trained baby elephant.

But this time two things troubled her. One was that for Bella Sand, evanescent youth had ceased to exist. With horror she had seen its death just under her chin a week ago. The other was that in spite of her attempt to reason with him and patronize him as a middle-aged man making love to her daughter's friend, Harry had left the house last night in a self-righteous and almost intelligent mood. She sighed. She must try to control her emotions and not weep;

she must look as well as possible. He would surely telephone. She concentrated all her thoughts on this, as it were, mentally compelling him to do so. She must have a talk with him. She had confidence in her powers. He would apologize, they would go to the theatre that night and see something which would change his thought. In the meantime, she must send Zoe and Doreen to the country until his departure for Europe. Two young beauties in the house were enough to disturb her Harry. Yes, she would pack them off to the country. Then everything would proceed in the same old way.

She thought of Zoe, if she might only marry off Zoe. She realized the stuff of which Zoe was made. The cautious look of the mother cat came into her eyes; a man with force enough to subjugate her, — that would mean salvation for her daughter. Jack Harrington had force. But Jack was poor, and for Bella Sand poverty counteracted any power. Force lifts men out of poverty, true; she doubted not that Jack Harrington would eventually be a very rich man with the proper woman at his side to help — but in the meantime? Zoe would never be content to work with a man; the child was not trained for that kind of thing, thought Mrs. Sand, with a touch of pride. And furthermore in that position, she would be unable to help her poor old mother, who was now “on the wane.” Mrs. Sand was devoted to this girl and very ardently she wished for Zoe a pure upright life — if she could get it without any sacrifice.

Unfortunate, indeed, are those people who are not willing to pay for what they want. But "something for nothing" was Mrs. Sand's religion. Much as she wanted decency, she was unwilling that her child start in plain poverty with a man who loved her. This great human army of below the well-to-do was nauseating to her, however hearts beat in it. Mrs. Sand secretly realized that there was no danger of Zoe entering that army, and she was going to be made to realize it more and more every day. Yet she sighed from her innermost depths at the fear which haunted her, the fear that her girl would follow in her mother's footsteps. After considering the matter studiously she determined to ask Felix Strange, who was one of her favorite platonic friends, to find for Zoe, a rich husband. Her thoughts returned to Harry Balster.

At last the telephone bell softly sounded and smiling confidently she went to answer.

"This you, Bella? — Harry talking."

"Hullo, dear boy — now, don't explain anything — I think I understand — you know, dear — I have before but come up and —"

"Er — just give me your attention, Bella; this is a serious matter."

"Why, Harry," drawled Mrs. Sand laughing.

"Don't interrupt —" came the dogmatic final tones. "Just listen. Ah — I have written a message to you — but have decided it is wiser not to send any written philippic. Can you hear quite plainly?"

"Oh, yes, what is it?" said Mrs. Sand lightly, but

she grasped the receiver so that the veins stood out cruelly on her hand, and she went very pale.

“Very well — I say, this is final, I am through. From this day on, as far as you are concerned, Harry Balster is dead, no hard feelings, understand, but consider me dead, that’s all.”

“Harry,” she cried, “come to me — at least come here and tell me — I can’t bear — ”

“I will read this,” came the distinct metallic voice through the ’phone.

“Whether you listen or not is immaterial. You have spent fortunes and I was willing that you should. Now, it is over. I know you have letters written when I was soft, speaking of marriage. But there’s no chance of blackmail here, as you tried in the case of young Jandemeer, you are Bella Sand — that’s all I have to remind you.”

“Oh God! Oh, God — ” cried the woman in trepidation.

But the gruff voice was unrelenting and continued, “If you are a good sport, which is the best you people can ever be, you won’t wail, but will realize on your jewels, buy a nice little bungalow some place, and live peaceably for the rest of your days — or do whatever you damn well please. I don’t care; I know you have collateral on which you can realize a good sum.”

“Realize on what? ” she cried.

“Your jewels — I said, I have spent nearly a hundred thousand on them. Now, no fireworks please.

When we meet again it will be in other pathways, this chapter is closed. Good-bye." He had hung up.

A low cry of pain broke from Bella Sand. Dropping to the lounge and dully trying to realize the exact meaning, she clasped her throat. Horrible reminiscences passed grimly through her brain. All her ugly sins marched slowly by to the funeral dirge of her present ruin. And infinitely more horrible were the forebodings of the future which thronged over her head like blinding clouds of smoke.

How long she remained there she never knew, but suddenly she started at the shrill voice of Mrs. Van Twiller in the hall. Ambiguously she wondered if Sylvia might be trusted. She must talk to someone or go mad.

"Be — ella!"

Mrs. Sand did not answer for a moment — still dazed.

There was a rustle, a slight perfume. The door had opened and Mrs. Van Twiller, nodding a long green plume, peeked in coquettishly. "My, aren't you ready, dearie? Aren't you going to the morning concert at the Plaza?" Then advancing, she saw the glary-eyed creature who sat rigid, like a dead woman, and she uttered a little scream.

"No acting please, Silvia," pleaded Bella. The blood flushed suddenly in her head as it did lately when she became excited: "No acting, now sit down quietly, give me a drink first. I — I have just had some upsetting news."

“My,” gasped Silvia after her friend had gulped down the brandy. “You’re pale again now, — I’d better call a doctor.”

“Please sit down, Silvia, you may console a very very weary woman.”

Silvia groaned imperceptibly at a thought of her own. “This is where Bella asks me for that thousand she loaned me, and I cannot possibly get it now,” was what went through her head. “Dearie,” she said, “if there is anything in the world I can do to help you, just tell me.” And with a rattle of her miniature gold jewelry shop of chains and rings, she pressed fervently the thin hand of her friend.

“It is all over, Silvia, all over.”

“You don’t mean Peter — ”

“Ha,” laughed Bella. “Peter — what is Peter to me any more than the rest of them — my little band of parlor snakes! Do you think they would care a darn about me — robbed of my good — food — my background? He comes with the crowd — when the crowd comes — they follow the sun.” She waved her hand about the room. “Pull away the rose-colored luxury and what am I? Now that is over. It is Harry — he — he’s left me, Silvia, he’s left me cold.”

“Merciful heaven — you don’t mean that — after all these years,” said Silvia. “Isn’t there any settlement? ”

Bella shook her head. “Irrevocably ruined,” she said.

Silvia bent forward impulsively, and with a strained

theatrical gesture, enveloped Bella in her strong arms. Together they gazed out of the window, down the oblivious Fifth Avenue.

“Why should he make you suffer?” hissed Silvia — “I can’t bear it.” Her eyebrows still raised in an expression of pain, she looked towards the brooding grey sky, as if she expected an applauding gallery. “Ah — my poor Bella,” she moaned.

Still no word from Bella, who presently released herself and went over to sit on the lounge. The fact of her friend’s ruin meant nothing at all to Silvia, who could think of no way of getting that money, and she could conceive of no other motive for Bella’s confiding in her. What was worse, she could think of no legitimate excuse for not returning the money at present. She must keep Bella off that subject, in some way, else away would go the price of three smart gowns.

“You know, dear,” said Silvia, “we all expected any day to hear that you and Harry were married.”

“Yes, Silvia, that was my great hope.”

“Your hope,” scoffed Silvia. “Mercy, it would be a calamity to be tied up to a thing like that forever. You are too superior a woman. There are others,” and Silvia nodded her green plume.

“No, this was my only hope,” said Bella, in a little distant arid voice, which seemed to come from the grave. “There will be no others, Silvia.”

“Oh, pooh — ”

“When one has greedily made one’s days count for twice their length,” continued Bella in the same

arid tone, "one is twice one's age at forty-five. I am forty-five. I know some women are in full bloom at my age, ready to meet the difficult parting of the ways. Ready to meet the strange nerve-racking, the mental fever of a journey across an abyss. They take it victoriously. Maybe it leaves them on a new road."

Silvia sighed genuinely this time. Last month had marked her own forty-first birthday — no one knew it of course, and she thought no one would ever suspect. But again she sighed. "Bella is a good talker," she thought, "always gets poetic when she's blue, does the 'sad little woman act' better than anyone I ever knew. It's most depressing, but it's probably brought a large part of her success with men."

Mrs. Sand studied a beautiful pastel over her head. "See that picture, Silvia?"

"Yes, dearie, why?"

"You see the woman reaching from the little canoe for the water lily. It is just out of touch like the allure an old woman tries for. There comes the day when the flower of attraction is just impossible to touch. This is that tragic day for me, Silvia. My youth and attraction are gone — gone!" The first tear appeared in Bella Sand's eyes and she buried her head as the sobs shook her violently.

Some minutes passed before the storm of weeping ceased, and Silvia quietly opened her vanity case, absorbed the tear which threatened to spoil her newly blackened eyelashes, pulled down her mouth, rouged it carefully, powdered her nose, and then peered

earnestly into the little mirror. "Forty-two," she thought. "No one would think it of me," she reiterated. "I will take good care of myself — I must never be broken like poor Bella, I will never waste my good healthy energy!" Then, communion with herself over, she noiselessly closed the little vanity case, and went over to the couch. She took the deeply-veined hand tightly within her own. "There, dear, you have cried long enough now, but it has made you feel better I know." She bathed her lace handkerchief in some perfume from an ivory and gold bottle and placed it across Bella's eyes.

"Silvia, I want you to help me — I want to talk —" began Bella. "You are here with me at the funeral of my youth."

"Now see here, dear — it's all right — this 'youth's gone' stuff — but it's all nonsense, as you know."

Mrs. Sand straightened. "Don't play to me, Silvia, the fact is that — that in old age one is forgotten — only youth is marketable."

"Well, if you insist upon this," acquiesced her friend, "it may be true, but this 'poverty stuff' for you don't go — you know as well as I do — you have other youth to market."

"What do you mean?" ejaculated Mrs. Sand.

Silvia fixed her with a cold brazen stare. "Zoe and Dory O'Moore," she said.

"Silvia!" Mrs. Sand's lips curled in disdain. "My daughter is beautiful; she will marry a rich husband in time!"

“ Oh yes,” responded Silvia, stiffening. “ I wish you luck.”

“ You don’t think for a moment I would have designs on two young girls — that I would allow my daughter — ”

“ To follow in the footsteps of her mother — ” added Silvia, affecting a very cultured tone, then she threw her arm over the back of the chair, leaned forward facing the grief-stricken woman with her brazen eyes. “ Now I’m going to tell you something, Bella,” her voice became hoarse and tired. In truth, so moved was Silvia that she was allowing herself to express what was really in her mind. “ Zoe is her mother’s daughter in every way — only more so. She has her own scheme of life already doped out, the fruit of her vacations at home. She’s had affairs with different men around here from the time she was sixteen, and she has colossal vanity. In this scheme of hers, husbands or holy poverty or anything else holy, plays no part — that was all gladly left behind in the convent, and don’t you forget it, and this girl Dory O’Moore is her inseparable — she may be all right — she has had no vocation, but it’s a cinch she must soon be the same thing as Zoe. Now, perhaps the husband will come — perhaps not. But in the meantime you won’t want for money if you’re genial and take things as they will inevitably come to these two kids. So better make up your mind to grow old pleasantly and realize that even a mother can’t grow oranges in a Maine cabbage patch. A potato seed grows a potato.”

Silvia contracted her brows, bit her lip, and flung her cigarette on a little amber tray. "Train them up not to hold themselves cheap, Bella — that's the best advice I can give you — don't permit a lot of these Jack Harrington-Jules Blenner hangers on."

"Please, Silvia." Mrs. Sand crouching against her pillow had not the strength to answer — indeed did not even attempt it — she told herself she considered Silvia abysmally stupid and sordidly immoral — a woman who could not conceive a respectable motive in anyone. There was no use expecting anything else from the poor thing.

Now Mrs. Sand was a curious combination. Fundamentally she was intelligent and normally good. Superficially she was selfish and abnormally bad. She gloried in getting something for nothing. After the life behind her the superficial side of the woman was of course the positive side and came to the front now and she secretly hoped Silvia was right. For she seemed to see Dory and Zoe throwing her the lines of riches and power which she would grasp avidly rather than sink in the repellent sea of poverty.

Silvia glanced at her diamond wrist watch. "I really must run, Bella, I forgot — lunch engagement, you'd no idea what chic people you meet at these stage women's meetings and everybody's in the sister line — old fashioned ideas and all that! Now buck up, old girl. I wish I had this wonderful place of yours and these two beautiful girls on my hands — catch me worrying about an old fathead like Harry." Mrs.

Sand silenced her friend with the majesty of her glance, rose from the sofa and went over to her.

“Silvia, I must move at the end of the month.”

“But the furniture, all this beautiful furniture, dearie.”

“It is to be sent to Harry. It is his and he insists upon having it, he told me last night.”

“Well, the old beast — I just wouldn’t give it to him!” Silvia batted her eyelids, and folded her arms in righteous wrath.

“You don’t know Harry when he wants anything. He will have this furniture. It is in his name. He says I must realize on my jewels.”

“Well,” said Silvia, much relieved at this new source of income from her friend, “thank God they are good for a pile that will keep you always. You seem to want the simple country life, and that’s a consolation, dear, perhaps it’s a good thing just now, till you’re stronger.”

Bella Sand tottered. “Oh, Silvia,” she whispered, “it is just that I — the jewels — I have had them all duplicated in paste — that is why I am ruined. You see — I — I have burned all my bridges.”

“Bella, you never did such a shiftless thing as that! I never would have believed — ”

The two women sat down holding each other’s hands, Bella’s brain a hopeless blank. But Silvia’s was filled with ominous fears. For she too had duplicated all her jewels in paste. Only last week, she sold Bill’s large solitaire, which he said had belonged to his

mother. It had paid an extra milliner's bill. What if there should come a time when she too was in a position of this kind? Silvia was deeply affected. She was worried about herself.

"Bella," she said, "I never realized how foolish this kind of thing really is, until this moment. I—I have done the same thing, even Bill's ring," she held out her finger and the stone gleamed in the dim light. "It is paste."

Mrs. Sand scarcely seemed to hear—she patted Silvia's hand absently, realizing the thousand she had loaned was beyond recalling, and the futility of asking for it.

"I never knew you needed money, Bella—Harry—"

"Yes, yes, Harry gave me everything—he was lavish," said Bella, "but he would draw the line at certain places—by way of discipline. 'Wilful waste makes woeful want,' he would say in his bourgeois way and that aphorism always enraged me. My whims were my only gods. Ah, Silvia, as I look back on my life it has been absolutely fantastic, and it all seems very long ago, very strange and unreal. I sold my jewels one by one for secret trips—trips with these people—extra gowns—gowns which I did not need—trifles—always ephemeral things. There was a curious joy in the deception. I don't know if you can understand that, Silvia. I loved—Jack Vandemus—as you know. That period of my life was a happy one and I thank God for it—I never deceived Jack

but he threw me over. Harry meant nothing to me. Like most men he had faith in the power of material possessions to attract women. I loved to deceive him, I never thought Bella Sand would see the day it would all be forced down her throat as it is now. Ugh! How ugly! ” She went over to a little inlaid cabinet and taking out a crystal bottle and glass poured herself a drink. “Join me, Silvia? ”

Mrs. Van Twiller rose gradually. “Ah, Bella,” she said. “This stuff is the curse—you know as well as I—it is the thing that takes youth—the thing that drags one to the gutter,” and Silvia towered over poor Bella Sand, with hand upraised, impersonating the demon rum.

Bella continued drinking making a wry face after each gulp. At any other time she would have taken her cue and acted just as well and falsely as her friend agreeing with her, entirely, and waiting until her departure for the drink. Now she shiftlessly responded, “If I ever needed a drink I need it now—I have a dreadful headache—Furthermore this is no ‘home brew’—it’s good old *pre-war*, ‘deerie,’ so fear not, (while it lasts!).”

“It is momentary comfort, Bella, and I beg of you not to take it, dear. It is ruin, ruin, ruin, that’s all.” Silvia would have her scene!

“You look pretty seedy today yourself. Silvia, a little drink will do you good.” This speech brought Mrs. Van Twiller back to herself quite suddenly.

“Well, how can I help it, if I look seedy—after

you've upset me so, Bella?" she whispered. A large tear appeared, and she let it roll demolishingly down. "After all I'm nothing but a pauper myself," and giving away to her grief, and forgetting entirely her sermon, Silvia went to the cabinet and poured a drink nearly filling the glass with Scotch. Then the two fading friends, Mrs. Van Twiller with gay green feather sadly nodding and Mrs. Sand, with rich kimono falling away at the knees disclosing two little feet desolately turned in, sat close together for some time, crying and sipping.

CHAPTER VIII

DORY opened tired eyes, and leaned her head on her elbow. She still seemed to feel Balster's obnoxious caress. The clock had struck five before she slept. Then she had dreamed only exquisite dreams — about Jules Blenner. Indeed her mind was still warm and nebulous from them. The grey cold light of a winter morning appeared showing distinctly the outlines of things in a real world.

“Mercy! I should have been thinking of business,” sighed the girl. She leaned her head to the side like a listening canary bird. No sound of anybody being up, yet there seemed about the place a hushed atmosphere of tumult.

She bathed quickly feeling all the muscles contract as she awakened. “I can't think here.” She longed to steal out to mass. This, of course, was the habit of a life-time. Mass — amid mellow colors streaming in through Gothic windows, — incense, — and the tones of the organ, there she could kneel and meditate. She wanted to see the faces of the congregation undergo the charming change which comes over faces under the influence of the church's mysticism. She wanted to feel herself being carried away above with them in the flow of spiritual thought. It was that need of supernatural help which comes to people when in

trouble. Hunger did not help Dory's mental attitude. But she feared to venture into the dining-room. The little enamel bell at her bed meant nothing to the girl. She decided to stand at the door and eventually a servant would pass along the hall.

The maid knocked and entered. "A gentleman to see Miss O'Moore." On a little ivory platter was a card saying:

"Mr. Jules Saxon Blenner (with a message from Felix Strange)."

In terror Dory leapt onto the bed with one bound and called Zoe.

"Oh, are you hurt — what is it?" Then Zoe saw the card. She enigmatically raised her brows with a special expression. Then — "What a funny hour to call — half past ten in the morning!" she said.

"Yes — I know," gulped Dory. "I won't see him — I —" Dory was clasping her hands to her heart as she spoke.

"Why, of course you will," drawled Zoe. "It's too exciting. I wish Jack would come. Miss O'Moore will receive the gentleman in the library," announced Zoe to the maid.

"You know," she confided to Dory, "They don't care what hour they call — when they're in love. I have an engagement to lunch with Jack at a cute restaurant down town. There, that is my secret. I'm pretending to go over to Ann's, so she must be in the secret too. Dory, don't gape so, dear — if you keep him waiting too long he'll think something funny is the matter."

You may be sure Dory had no desire to have things appear any funnier than they were. Automatically she took a little coil of soft auburn hair out and patted it on her cheek. Then suddenly she stopped and grasped her breast and bent her head with the charming listening attitude which, when a child, caused people to nickname her "Dove."

"I hear my heart beating so, Zoe — do people die of palpitation — I have it now. Jules Blenner. Jules Saxon Blenner! Is that what it says? "

"My, you're fussed," laughed Zoe. "Here's a nice flower, pin it on and hurry. I'd like to hear about it before I start."

With trembling fingers Dory pinned the dahlia on her black dress, so near the supple white throat that its color was reflected on the shining skin.

Then Zoe, in high excitement, pushed her out into the hall, assuring her she was perfectly beautiful.

On the threshold Dory hesitated a moment, then she caught sight of Blenner from the door of the salon. He stood looking out of the window of the little library. His black hair looked as if it has been polished, the high lights emphasized the fine moulding of his head. His blue suit fitted his slight figure perfectly as he stood with chest in and shoulders drooping a bit.

It was so peaceful and cozy in there! One of those rooms which looked as if it had existed and would exist forever. Beneath the low ivory colored mantel burned a softly crackling fire at which Nini, the

yellow Angora sinuously warmed her soft fur. Luxuriously filled book-shelves lined the lower wall. Above them were soft brown hangings, and the comfortable chairs were covered in woven gold and black. Near the fire was a charming round table of the 17th century upon which were some fragrant yellow roses in an ancient blue jar which had once belonged to Anne of Brittany and near it was an exquisitely bound volume bearing the crown and porcupine of Louis XII. Collecting rare editions which in reality he knew nothing and cared nothing about was one of Harry Balster's affectations. At the window, framed in its golden drapery, the smoke of his cigarette curling about him as he looked out into the damp greyness of the January morning, was Jules.

For some moments more Dory stood silently on the threshold, regarding it all with trembling lips and brown brooding eyes. A wave of tenderness for him passed over her — transfigured her. Suddenly the man thrust his hands in his pockets impatiently and turned.

“Good morning!” said Dory hurriedly.

“Oh, good morning, Miss O'Moore, I didn't hear you coming — I say, you must think it strange my calling at this hour. “But,” he continued with his charming smile, “Felix said I must deliver this message personally — and I of course was delighted. You see I am to tell you that he is ill, not seriously, but ill, and unable to meet you at luncheon. You see Mrs. Strange is in Newport so there is no way for

you to lunch at home with him." He smiled again, draping her with a solicitous admiring look from his grey eyes.

Neither spoke for an embarrassing moment.

"Aren't you going to bid me sit down?" he asked.

"Oh, pardon," said Dory in high confusion. She lifted a huge armchair and would have borne it nearer the fire. But he took it away from her — their hands touched — a fleeting moment.

"Are you really very sorry I came, Miss O'Moore — as sorry as you look?" he asked as they were seated at either side of the crackling wood.

Dory smiled rather foolishly.

"You smile with your lips," said Jules as he bent towards her, "but your eyes are inexpressibly sad."

"Oh, I'm sorry, sorry about my expression I mean."

"Felix charged me to say that if there is anything you need — especially that thing that paupers are so munificent about — advice, you are to ask me. I am as good at advice as Felix is at practical aid. I can't afford real aid to anybody — I wish I could."

Dory raised her eyebrows, and bent her head until her delicate nose touched the yellow dahlia. "Thanks — so much," she responded faintly. Blushing outrageously did not help her situation in the least.

"Felix said, you were to trust me," added Jules in a sing-song voice, and he imitated a shy child with an innocent little moue. Then they both burst out laughing, and all confusion fled from Dory.

"You played so well last night," she said, at last,

"I want to thank you for it again. It is a great pleasure for me to hear such playing."

"Oh thanks, do you mind if I smoke?" He lighted a cigarette and leaned back, still looking steadfastly at the girl. "I play especially well when I feel some sympathetic presence in the room and I felt it last night." He leaned forward again, holding the cigarette in his muscular fingers, allowing the violet smoke to encircle his dark head. "I felt it — in you — so you see the thanks are all on my side."

Dory's lips quivered and smiled appreciation; she told him about the effect his playing had upon other people in the room, and for a while they talked of music. Dory proved to be quite "au courant" and her intelligent appreciation charmed Blenner.

"Do you sing anything by Tschaikowsky," he asked.

"Yes — 'A qui brula d'amour,' but . . ."

"Please do — now — just softly, I will play it for you."

"I haven't much of a voice," said Dory. "I haven't really."

"I don't believe it," he replied, "but even if you have not you would interpret like an artist — which is much more important — come."

Dory shook her head and putting out her graceful hand with a charming indolent movement, started to arrange the yellow roses in the blue bowl. There behind it, was a picture of Balster. Fear came suddenly into her eyes — suppose he should come back to have a last scene — suppose —

"Oh, I can't sing this morning," she gasped spasmodically. I . . . I . . ."

Blenner noticed her quick change to pallor. He threw his cigarette into the fire — went over and stood near her. "I know you have something to ask," he whispered, "if you don't wish to trust me, write it to Felix now — and I will take the note at once."

"I do need advice," she whispered, "and I must have it right away."

Jules started to take the lovely trembling hand in his, but quickly drew back, remembering Felix's warning: — "She is a gentlewoman, not one of the Sand crowd."

"Will you believe that you may have confidence in me?" There was something in his low languid voice that was almost hypnotic. It calmed and reassured at once. "I am a stranger to you, Miss O'Moore, but if you have the woman's intuition you will understand my feelings — and —" he smiled again, inclining his head quite near her as he added softly, "and not be frightened."

"I have confidence in you — I feel — you are my friend."

"You know," he said, "Felix is very worried about you, naturally being here with Mrs. Sand. That's what you want to talk about, isn't it?"

Dory winced. "*You* don't think Mrs. Sand is bad, do you?" she whispered. Jules raised his eyebrows in helpless interrogation:

"Do you?" he asked.

“No, but I know the world does — I know all about it — the condition — her — and everything — but listen, last night —” and Dory recounted the conversation between Balster and herself. She imitated Balster exactly. “You see the point,” she concluded, “this horrible old thing thinks he is too good to marry her. But he enticed her into living this way — promising always that some day — don’t you know — he could bring himself to make her his wife. Poor dear — I feel that Fate has always been against her. You know . . .” Dory turned her flower-like face towards and near him, “Fate might be dead against any of us. The flesh is weak, as the Bible says. I saw her poor sad face and all the suffering of her tired spirit and I want so much to help make this easy for her —” she added raising her brows, — “but, perhaps you have no sympathy because the world calls her a ‘bad woman.’”

“No, I too am sorry for Mrs. Sand. She will miss all this luxury terribly — Balster is a rotter . . .”

“And then,” continued Dory, “I . . . I . . . was terrified with what he said about ‘men will call’ . . . and . . .”

Jules Blenner frowned, turned nervously in the chair, — “Sure enough, one did this morning, that’s why you acted so strange at first . . . he smiled very tenderly — “but you understand now . . .” he sighed, and lighted another cigarette. “It is an awful mess,” he said. “You say you must make your living and start at once. Miss O’Moore, the best way to do that

is to be helped financially . . . but not by a man," he added quickly. "That is my first and most important advice. Promise me one thing — you will never allow a man to help you with money. No matter how *friendly* he may seem. It is . . ."

Dory looked so strangely at him — he seemed to finish his sentence by thought transference.

"These are the things I can do," said the girl, "to make my own living. I can sew and embroider, I can sing and play the piano fairly well. Of course I feel I *could* do best on the stage. I love it, and one can rise slowly — I know. My mother was on the stage. I am willing to devote my life to it." Dory looked appealingly at him. "But you know, Mr. Blenner, I have no stage training — and you know unless one is high up on the stage one is *declassé*."

A glint of cynicism sharpened Jules' dark-lashed eyes. "Yes, Miss O'Moore," he said, "one is as *declassé* as a cook as one is as a chorus girl — and vice versa, *declassé* also is the saleslady, the telephone operator, the factory girl, in other words, in all reasonable ways of making a poor honest living, one is constantly in danger of the 'man higher up' — who generally takes the form of a hawk. There is no preference except that the most independent of these callings, the most lucrative and respected, is that of the cook."

The girl listened pensively to him with a little wan smile. She was thinking that Zoe would unquestionably go on the stage as she had often said she wanted

to, and it would be best for them to go together. They could help and protect each other, and both could protect Mrs. Sand.

“The actual solution,” came Jules’ quick staccato voice, “would be for some wealthy woman philanthropist to back you. Most philanthropists — these days are sort of money lenders. They get all the credit for charity — but there is generally some stipulation that they will be paid back with interest when the prodigy succeeds. So don’t think it charity I am suggesting, Miss O’Moore. If someone like that would back you, say in a kindergarten, or studio for music lessons to beginners. Or,” he continued, touching the tops of his fingers together and raising his eyebrows — “you might be a private secretary to a lady, but ladies never want beautiful young private secretaries. I’m afraid there’s no opening there. Now if I only had money. But I have not even made my official *début* yet, I just go around unknown towns giving concerts for which my manager gets most the cash, and having my compositions that I slave so over, refused. Nobody understands them. My dad does not believe in backing me — though he’s very rich. But you are not listening to a word I say . . .”

“I think you were saying that I must not accept money from any man but you” . . . laughed Dory softly.

Already the girl was being brought to realize that man protects a woman he loves with all his might against everything in the world — except himself.

"Unfortunately I must leave tomorrow for a concert tour of the West," said Jules. He leaned forward and seemed to enwrap the girl with a soft veil of tenderness from his eyes. "I don't want to go . . . because of — you! "

Dory examined her flower assiduously. Both were silent while Jules lighted still another cigarette.

"How fascinating he is," thought Dory. "How he must affect the women of his audience." She remembered with a pang the musicians who used to give recitals occasionally at Chateauden, the girls' wild adoration for them and the panegyrics they could deliver on their personal charms. Musicians seemed to be a race in themselves, apart. They seemed to like all this adulation, to accept it as their divine right. Dory sighed. Perhaps it was unfortunate to love one? But could that be helped now? "

"I shall not be gone very long — " he was saying. "Not any longer than I must and may I write — so you won't forget me entirely? " When that was settled with few words and much meaning —

"Perhaps when you come back all this will have vanished," said Dory waving her hand to indicate the room. "You must promise me one thing, whatever happens, — we shall all probably be in some ugly place after this . . . promise . . . you will never let anyone say anything mean against Mrs. Sand. I know her to be kind and sweet. She would have been a sort of good mother to me."

"That is all you have to say — I am for her," said Jules.

“Just remember that circumstances have been against her,” continued Dory. “She is brave and will come through this misfortune like a queen and Zoe and I will help — and you and Felix may too.”

He came and stood close to her. “You may count on me — always. People say all kinds of things about Mrs. Sand, but I believe it is not up to us mortals to judge her. She has been kind to you, that shows her goodness. I must go now, but soon I’ll return to you, for I have met someone — necessary to me as music, — belonging to the harmony of my life.” His voice dropped so low and became so soft it was almost a caress. “Will you take very good care of that someone — for me?”

The girl started and drew back.

“I’m sorry,” he said very quietly — “but I had to tell you — that you have a most respectful idolator in me. This you surely understand.”

“Why do you say that?” asked Dory. Henry Balster’s gruesome prophecy rushed across her mind. “Why do you say that?”

But his frank low voice was reassuring.

“Why do you let your soul shine through your eyes?” he touched the yellow flower with his finger. “Give me this,” he said, “to say you will write and confide in me, and not forget — will you — if you can?”

Slowly the little lovely flower was drawn forth like a golden answer. Taking her hand which held it, in both his own, he kissed the soft petals, as he looked far into Dory’s questioning eyes.

The girl trembled with the exquisite thrill of contact but the next moment her blood ran cold. For in the doorway, stood Mrs. Sand in a white kimono falling away at the silk-stockinged lace-beruffled knees, and Mrs. Van Twiller grinning maudlinly with a green feather over the side of her ear. There they stood, holding each other up very unsuccessfully.

If Dory could have seen anything save the unquestionably dilapidated condition of her benefactress, whom she had just championed so successfully, — she would have perceived Jules' painfully suppressed laughter at this familiar sight. But he immediately went towards Mrs. Sand, with hand outstretched. "How do you do, Bella?"

The lady drew herself up haughtily, at the same time drawing her hand back in a spectacular manner. "I should shink you would be ashamed to speak to — to me —" she said blinking her darkened eyelashes furiously . . . "after what I just saw — how dare you make love to Miss O'Moore — how dare you — I shay!"

Here Mrs. Van Twiller, apparently in a much less dogmatic mood, interrupted: "Oh — Be-ella — ish all right, — no harm done — they're young," and she grinned benignly with watery eyes at the petrified Dory. "Kittens mush play," she added, in a mellifluous voice — "Kittens mush play. Doncher know Herford says: 'Silvia waved her finger —'

“ ‘ Gather kittens while ye may
Time brings only sorrow —
An’ the kittens of to-day ——
Will be old cats to-morrow.’ ”

Mrs. Sand swept her away with a gesture, and supported herself on the heavy curtain. “ Jules Blenner,” she said, swaying a little with the curtain, “ the man that lays a hand on my daughter — or my adopted daughter ” — she indicated Dory solemnly and nodded her little head ominously as she looked at Jules out of half-closed eyes — “ hash to answer — to me.”

Straightening his shoulders Jules spoke very quietly, attempting to subjugate her with the stern tones of his voice. “ Bella, you have misunderstood — believe me — you must think how embarrassing this is for your friend — for Miss O’Moore.”

“ I want — eh — you to understand,” continued Mrs. Sand regally gathering up her kimona so as to cover herself, but in reality there was a ludicrous exposé — directoire fashion — from the other side, “ that my children are always to be ch-chaperoned — when you call — I shall ch-ch-chaperon, of course, these two young ladies — it is proper — absolutely proper — they be ch-ch-chaproned — no matter *what* they say about *me* — Jules.” Here the sharp little nostrils dilated and her scant bosom rose and fell quickly, “ no one will be able to shay — a — a — snap of the finger — about these young ladies.”

Here Mrs. Van Twiller picked her way across the room, and stood near Mrs. Sand. “ O, Be-ella,” she

drawled, feeling it her duty to humor her poor helpless friend, "we know they're ladies." She grinned and made a weak, wide sweep of the hand — "We're all ladies." She bowed towards Jules, laying hand daintily on chest, and nearly losing her balance, "'Cept Mr. Blenner." She threw back her head and straightened the green feathered creation which quickly fell back out of place over her ears. She nodded her head and raised her eyes piously. "God shave us from lady-like musicians," she laughed, and closed her eyes, still laughing at her great joke. "You'll never be one of those, Jules."

"Not a sn-snap of the finger," reiterated Mrs. Sand severely oblivious of previous remarks, and so saying she sank into a chair. Then she looked solemnly and severely at Mr. Blenner, who, much relieved to note that the doorway was now clear, took a hasty departure, feeling it the very kindest thing to do for the sake of Dory.

CHAPTER IX

A MONTH later, the scene of these lives had changed, and truly fate is a skillful scene shifter. In the life story of the Sands and Dory, fate had cleared the stage of every trace of luxury in less than no time, and they found themselves in an ugly set of screaming red flowered wall paper, stove pipes, clattering dishes, in a boarding house, run by a sharp-eyed woman who seemed to suffer from ossification of the facial expressions. And she was a Medusa with the power of turning impecunious boarders to stone. I trust you do not know the kind.

Friends fled like magic. Of course they are such poor actors on a poverty-stage set, it is just as well they are so scarce. "Friends," sighed Bella Sand one evening as the two girls sat sewing on the shabby white iron bed, "they are people who are kind to you in order that they may get something out of you."

But Dory leaned over and pressed her hand. "Don't you believe I am a real friend?"

Leaning her head on an emaciated arm, Bella Sand regarded the girl.

"Yes," she answered. "You are one. One friend I have."

"I suppose that's what makes people talk about friendship so much," remarked Zoe. "Friends are so

precious rare, — like diamonds — you're the real diamond to me all right, Dory."

"Of course if Felix were able he would help us!" sighed Zoe. "But isn't it my Irish luck for him to have brain fever and be cooped up in a sanatorium just now — heaven only knows when he'll be out."

"Poor Felix, I hope and pray he will get better soon, — we have no one now — and Jules Blenner and Jack Harrington away," added Dory.

"Dear children," said Mrs. Sand, and her blowsy eyes told too plainly the fact that she had consumed a pint of whiskey before, and in place of dinner. "Dear children, Felix may die of this brain fever and as for those two boys, — they are as poor as church mice — don't think for a minute they can help us!"

"Oh, but they would help us with — with advice — and — and — sympathy," said Dory, "we" — and the proud lips curved into a smile — "Zoe and I are going to earn money to help ourselves!"

The sadness of this was too much for Mrs. Sand. Tears swelled up in her throat. "I never thought I'd see the day my child would have to earn her own living," she sighed. "One disgrace after another seems to be heaped upon me, heaped upon my poor heart."

"But it isn't a disgrace to earn your own living," responded Dory. "I — I think there is something noble about it. I'm sorry I wasn't trained for it — we both like the stage, Zoe and I — but we have no training, you see so we'll have to start from the very

bottom, perhaps in the chorus just as if we were people of inferior brains, but it will be interesting — really exciting — ”

“ Just the same,” piped up Zoe, “ the first rich man I can get to marry me — you bet I’ll be ‘ Mrs. Whatever-his-name-is ’ right away quick! ”

“ Mommie’s Baby,” cooed the consoled mother.

It was agreed that Dory was to go in search of a position on the stage for both girls, since Zoe didn’t have the “ nerve.”

Now for a month, the poor girl had sought work every day. The Broadway managers whom she saw, told her that small parts were for novices who could live without salaries, dress like royalty and perhaps even put their own money into the show. They asked enigmatic questions — “ Have you a backer? ” — “ Could you care for me ” — and had made many suggestions. One in desperation had advised Dory to “ go back to the farm.”

Finally, after weary search, the manager of The Bilbur Opera Company had welcomed Dory — because of having known her mother and for her own beauty, and accepted Zoe too for her “ chic ” — and had given both girls a place in the chorus of his “ show,” to go on the road, their stage clothes and travelling expenses paid, and sixteen dollars a week.

This delighted Dory and contented Zoe, as Dory assured her they’d have lots of fun in the chorus. Dory said they would allow themselves eight dollars a week apiece, and each send eight dollars to Mrs. Sand.

At ten o'clock next morning the two girls went to their first rehearsal.

It was held in a large, long room, over a saloon on Lexington Avenue. Its dirty dark walls had various names and remarks scratched on them. Near the three windows which faced on a dismal street, was an upright piano and around it were several kitchen chairs and several dusty benches. At the other side, a rail protected the little staircase that emitted an odor of "beers" and sausages and led down to the saloon. The two lovely girls leaned against it, and looked with interest at the dark red brown door on the other side of the room. It was the street entrance, and it surely admitted many strange weird figures.

A tall thin man appeared, with fair hair, very red eyelids and over-brilliant large green eyes. He looked around with an air of importance and disdain. Then, jerking his limbs, he went over to the window, took off his hat, coat, collar and waistcoat and put them all on the piano. That was evidently his domain. He tried over many songs, nervously putting in variations and scales, and always ending with four or five flamboyant chords. His name was Mr. Casey, the orchestra leader.

There was a short young man, well proportioned, and very neat. The thick, colorless hair was brushed off the side of his energetic little head. His face was pale and he had kindly, rather small blue eyes — a nice smile and gold filled teeth. He wore a trim grey

suit, trim stub-toed shoes, and a jerky red tie. Taking out a notebook he started to turn over the pages with a hand, all of whose fingers were half cut off, and later he called the roll. He proved to be Mr. Bradley, the stage manager.

There were thirty in the chorus, twenty women, ten men. Soon the contraltos, sopranos, tenors and basses were sorted and seated and began to learn their parts, while Mr. Casey, a big cigar between his teeth, pounded out their notes.

At lunch time the majority descended the rickety stairs to the saloon below and partook of a glass of beer and a sausage. Dory peered in the back room, as she passed through the hall and shuddering a little, she took Zoe's hand and hurried out to the street.

They looked at each other in solemn silence a moment, then Dory burst out laughing.

"I suppose we can't expect the gayety all of a sudden," she said.

"It's the limit," snapped Zoe.

"It's screamingly funny. Did you see that girl they called Avec Plazir, if that's not the map of Ireland on her face! "

Zoe laughed.

"It will be pretty nice when we get our sixteen plunks a week," said Dory, "and I'll tell you what, we'll take some of the money I have left, and buy our make-up boxes tonight."

"How much have you left? "

“About fifty dollars.”

Dory had loaned the remainder of the five hundred to Mrs. Sand to pay expenses.

“You’d better take my advice and hang on to the rest of it,” suggested Zoe, “after we buy the make-up tonight! ”

“All right, dear, I will — it’ll be lots of fun tonight. Your mother will teach us how to make up for the stage.”

“Yes,” said Zoe, “if she’s able — if she hasn’t been doctoring up her nerves with whiskey. It seems to me that ‘pre-war’ stock of mommie’s is being mysteriously replenished! ”

Quick tears rushed to Dory’s eyes. “I wish Jules would come back — he’d give us a little encouragement anyway.”

“I wish Jack Harrington would come,” sighed Zoe. “I’m just crazy about him, do you know that? ”

“But you said you’d marry anyone with money who’d ask you! ”

“Oh, well,” said Zoe, as she made a willful little moue — “I certainly would — but I’d never give up Jack — don’t you see? ”

“Don’t talk like that, Zodie dear.”

“I mean it! ”

There had been two weeks of constant rehearsing — two weeks of scanty nourishment and discouragement at Mrs. Sand’s irrational condition — her alternative gaiety and whimpering.

But Dory looked upon it all with smiling lips and eyes that were perhaps a trifle sad — but eyes in which hope lived — warm and golden. For the day's work was all engrossing. Its details were absorbingly interesting and Dory began to learn the lesson that constant occupation prevents misery from spinning her gloomy web in the human heart.

One of the "high lights" — as Dory called the important events — was the appearance of the principals and what was her amazement and delight to find that among them was Silvia Van Twiller! They foresaw at once an amusing companionship — a link of former glory. But time proved that no "principal" ever observed the proper etiquette of arrogance to the chorus better than the same blonde Silvia, she of the "undying friendship for her old pals."

But when the company left for Buffalo, Mrs. Sand, heavily veiled, insisted upon going down and seeing the girls off, and on perceiving her friend, Bella, Silvia Van Twiller fell upon her in her spectacular way, hoping the manager would see how dramatic she could be. Wiping away the last tear, she swore to Bella, she would look after the two "kiddies" and bade her, in an ominous tone, to cheer up for better days were coming. Mrs. Sand did not suspect in the least what her friend meant by this. Of one thing she was certain, the way would not issue from Silvia's purse.

Poor Bella Sand knew another thing for certain. She could not wait for her return home before having

something to buck her up. Zoe's pale little face at the carriage window and Dory's brown brooding eyes went right to her heart and she felt that nothing could give her relief but complete oblivion. But these days being of prohibition Bella considered herself "out of luck."

CHAPTER X

DRESSING-ROOM "No. 65" was a wooden box about ten feet square. It smelled of grease paint, of cheap perfume and perspiration. It was lined with gaudy costumes and one would have felt quite suffocated if the roof of this cellar had not been very high. Sitting closely together before a narrow shelf, crowded with make-up, were six girls. Each one bent forward towards a little crooked mirror, and diligently painted her face. Next the far wall sat Dory O'Moore. Two tiny curls had escaped on the back of her pretty neck, but the rest of the auburn mass was tied in a tight top-knot, so it would not be touched by grease paint. Next her sat Zoe who had quickly acquired the habit of her associates in not wearing anything over her chemise unless she was cold. Then came "Pearl April," "pony" of Semitic origin. The only thing large about Pearl was her nose. She now drew a line of white down this member, which she confided to Zoe "makes it look smaller from the front" and straight-away Zoe drew an unnecessary line down her ridiculously little *retroussé*!

The fourth one was "Fanny Bliss," a respectable young widow with a good voice. When overcome with fatigue, the poor woman would become homesick for her two babies, and cry. Sometimes Dory would look

at their cunning photographs, and cry with her, and Fanny would be comforted.

Then came "Avec Plazir," an Irish girl with imagination, whose real name was Maggie Doolin. "Avec" went in for pink paradise plumes; and slightly spotted second-hand velvet suits. "Looks all right on the outside," remarked Pearl April with her Jewish accent, "but — Oie, Oie, for her own sake, I hope an accident never happens to her on the street! "

At the end of the line, sat a tall corpulent girl, who exuded a fat babylike contentment. "Constance Perry" wore a real sealskin and quiet, well-made clothes. The mystery of changing them every night for a "page's suit" of green wool tights was explained by her close companionship with Mr. Eliot, boss and manager.

The wooden door popped open and "Queenie," the wardrobe mistress, popped in. Her little black eyes were like two hatpins. Queenie was short and thin and wiry and every movement was a jerk. "If anybody ain't got everything they need, tell me now — the bell rings in ten minutes. Miss Plazir, did you darn them tights I gave ye this morning? "

Avec Plazir turned her head with the majesty of a queen. "Who did ye think darned them, my personal maid?" then scratching her mouse-colored hair thoughtfully with one finger, she remarked to the girls: "Really you'd think a millionaire was a friend to me the way that woman talks! "

"No sass, you!" said Queenie. "The public

wouldn't get much of a treat from you if you didn't sew 'em up." Quickly changing her tone to a mellifluous purr, she stepped over and put her arm around Dory. "Here's somethin' for you, dearie," as she held out a pair of pale blue silk tights.

"For me!"

"Yes, honey."

"But — Zoe's — I mean Sand's — are woolen! I couldn't wear these while everybody else has horrid woolen ones, even Zoe too."

"We only have ten minutes," answered Queenie, and with an enigmatic smile she added: "Miss Sand'll probably have a pair tomorrow!" She went out, then poked her head in the door. "It's the manager's orders yer to put 'em on at once, Miss O'Moore!"

The company had rehearsed all the previous night and until five o'clock in the morning, so poor Dory's head ached too much to solve any problem — she meekly obeyed.

In five minutes, the wardrobe mistress reappeared. Gazing at Zoe in rapture she gasped. "My, but you're the candy — ain't she a pippin, Miss Perry? Let me hook you up, dearie."

Always accepting service as her divine right, Zoe permitted herself to be hooked up as she stood before the mirror and continued painting her piquant little face.

"Anything else I can do fer the two beauties of the show?" asked Queenie in the same mellifluous

purr, gazing upon Dory and Zoe, with one hand on her hip and the other on the door-knob. But cries from an adjacent dressing-room caused her to suddenly jerk herself energetically away.

Immediately after her exit there were tributes paid to the wardrobe mistress such as would not bear whispering to one's closest friend, expressions which Zoe learned quickly and used profusely.

Dory was always tolerant though often nauseated by the mental atmosphere in the dressing-room. While she learned all the funny picturesque slang expressions of the stage, she never arrived at the vulgarisms.

"You two chicks better be careful of that old Magpie — Queenie," whispered Pearl April to Dory, as she nodded her head and wrinkled her Jewish nose, "peaches like you two is specialties for her," and she humped her back and waved her hand ominously. Tights, ballet skirts, blond wig, nothing ever prevented Pearl from looking like a little Jewish Rabbi. In a blond wig she suggested the spirit of Moses masquerading as "little Eva" — not that Pearl meant to be sacrilegious, she was just born with the "comedy face."

"Everybody on the stage, everybody on the stage!" There was a moment of busy powder puffs and rabbit's paws, and they all passed through the narrow dusty hall and down the dark hall of the cellar where they dressed — that hall with its one gaslight stretched out like a skeleton's arm, showing the way to a new life.

All dressed in gay colors, they mounted the almost perpendicular shaky wooden steps — and passed through a little dark passage, when — lo! a blaze of lights showed beyond the semi-darkness of the wings.

Soaking with perspiration and talking in excited sibilant whispers some scene-shifters were putting on the last touches to the first act.

At last everybody was on the stage — except, of course, the famous juvenile, named Miss O'Hara, a Jewess who waited downstairs with her married daughter, and Silvia Van Twiller. They disliked mixing unnecessarily with the common herd.

Bulging through his slender costume and perspiring through his grease paint was Mr. Eliot — the boss and stage manager. He already wore that far-away expression which some actors get when "in a part." Mr. Eliot went among his company. He had a few words of unnecessary encouragement for George Bradford, the fat, egotistical comedian. He had a smile and a compliment for the over-muscular little soubrette, and a slap on the back and a hand-shake for the tall, nervous, "clearing-his-throat" tenor. Everybody looked at everybody else with sleepless, feverish eyes and suddenly Dory realized that upon her was concentrated all attention.

She had pinned the cape of her costume across her legs. The poor girl was weak with fatigue and burning with shame.

Mr. Eliot went over to her and held out his hand. He had been the exacting taskmaster during rehearsals, now he was as tender and gentle as a woman.

"You must not do that, Miss O'Moore," he said, "they are very pretty, and are going to help so much towards our success tonight." His handclasp was frank — reassuring. "The papers tomorrow will say we have Dory O'Moore, the prettiest girl on the American stage — don't frown, or be shocked, child, you'll help us all to earn our living."

Dory winced.

But Mr. Eliot continued in a tone she could not resent: "They are just as important, believe me, Miss O'Moore, as the tenor's voice — as my acting!"

With trembling fingers Dory unpinned the cape, and everyone looked at the beautiful slender legs in the silk tights with cries of delight and admiration. "It was all right downstairs," she whispered to him through her dry throat, "but up here, with the lights — I feel as if I were in a nightmare, walking down the main street with nothing on. Do you ever have dreams like that?"

Mr. Eliot smiled into her questing brown eyes. "I'm going to give you an understudy next week," he whispered, "and you must get over stage fright first." Again he clasped her hand, and the grateful Dory felt she would do anything he asked cheerfully.

Zoe, who had been flirting with the tenor, pranced over at this point, and flung her arms around Dory. "We're the best looking things in the show," she whispered. Dory gave her a tight squeeze. "My dear," confided Zoe, "the tenor is crazy about me!"

Having cleared the stage, they rang the curtain up

on the first act. The company's doctor who was incidentally the "backer," stood in the wings and as the first act unfolded, he hissed remarks to the electrician. "Full house, but dead — dead. Gee, this is sad! George Bragdon — God! who said he was a funny man?"

Mr. Becker still scowled as he listened attentively to Bragdon's "big comedy lines." "Ugh, he put that joke over and it lay there! God! He ought to get a job driving a hearse!"

Then came the soubrette's song.

"By jinks, she ought to empty any house," moaned Becker, as he saw his money pouring down a chute into the sea. "Dee-liver me from these pugilist soubrettes. I wouldn't blame them for walking out on her-r-r."

"Chorus, chorus," whispered Mr. Bradley, the pert stage manager, waving his fingerless hand. "Up to you to put some ginger in it now — or rehearsal after the show tonight — ginger up, now the girl who doesn't smile gets fired — smile! . . ."

"Yes," interjected Becker, "every damn one of you smile" . . . he hissed.

Grabbing Dory's arm, Bradley waited for the cue, then gave her a push out.

Her head reeling before the glare, Dory smiled and led her line down the left. Her heart palpitating wildly, then she felt cold, but all the time she kept smiling . . . smiling.

Then Zoe's clammy hand met hers as the lines

formed a circle, and they both regained self-possession and the audience became a black mass dotted with various white spots. And the glaring footlights shut them off from a listening, inert world.

Dory seemed in a dream — going through automatic motions. Mr. Eliot was singing a song and the chorus ludicrously “kept time.”

Across the stage George Bragdon, the “funny” man stood doing some “comical stuff” by looking cross-eyed ‘at the pretty girls. As usual poor George was in the way, and when Dory led her line across stage she tripped on his protruding spurred foot and went prone.

For a moment it was ghastly. It seemed to Dory in that hideous instant that the whole show must be hooted off, and the world must come to an end. But without missing a note of his song Mr. Eliot went over, picked her up gently, and petted her pretty head as he went on his way.

This little human accident brought down the heretofore passive house. Mr. Eliot smiled at the audience. For the first time they were with him. He repeated his song. Again they applauded. He was recalled — once — twice. Before she knew it Dory was led in front of the curtain.

There was a tear in her eye but she smiled up at the gallery and kissed her hand prettily to them, then tripped into the wings amidst storms of applause.

“Ah, those beautiful legs of yours saved us,” whispered Mr. Eliot as they descended to the dressing-

room together. "Whoever gave you those good-looking tights?"

"But the management . . .

"Ah, no . . . I think not."

At this moment Silvia Van Twiller peeked out of her dressing-room door and gathered Dory to her ample bosom. "You're a great kiddie," she said, "and very sensible to accept the present of those tights."

Dory drew back. "My head feels so funny." Tears welled up in the shining eyes. "I don't understand, — Queenie brought them in — made me put them on — said they were mine!"

Silvia stood back against her dressing-table. "My dear, those tights are what made you the hit of the evening!" They were sent you by dear old Harry Balster!"

"Oh, I didn't know . . . I'll take them right off. Queenie never told me — there was no card — nothing."

"Oh, come on now, don't be a silly," reasoned Silvia, "He's staying at my hotel and let's all have a cozy meal together tonight. Bring Zoe too. I'll bet real food'll look good to both you kids," and Silvia grasped Dory's hand. "Harry Balster is simply nutty about you!"

Dory had one of those vacant sensations that come over people sometimes when everything in them cries out in vain for words — she stood looking at the woman.

And Silvia smiled and looked at Dory as she pulled in her pink brocaded corsets and marvelled that any man could go mad over such a little "chit of a thing."

At last Dory heard herself saying emphatically enough: "Miss Van Twiller, when you were a friend of Mrs. Sand's — I knew Harry Balster, and I h-hate him! "

"What! " shrieked Silvia, pinning on her enormous black hat, "when I was a friend . . ." She drew herself up — fairly bursting over the corsets, but after a pant or two she resumed quietly, "Little lady, I am always a friend of Mrs. Sand's."

The outrage of Silvia's patronizing actions all flowed over Dory . . . her demoralizing effect upon Zoe — her ingratitude to Mrs. Sand. "I said *when* you were a friend — you've acted like a demon to Zoe and me — making us feel our lowly positions, and nearly driving Zoe to desperation — driving her to do just what you want me to do now, but you won't be above us for *long*, and as for Mr. Balster, you are not young enough for him . . ."

"You damn little . . ."

"Everybody on the stage for the last act," sang the callboy . . . "Everybody on the stage."

Her heart beating wildly, Dory flew towards the stairs — leaving Silvia to swear at her maid, as she hurried into a dress.

She kissed Zoe wildly on the cheek before taking her place in line and in her eyes was the look of the enraged mother lioness.

Still trembling with rage at the thought of Silvia's strategem, she peered out through the wings, and there, sitting in the first row was Harry Balster.

And there was she — the proud pure maiden — tripping about with his tights on, of all things . . . tights!

Truly it was a fantastic life — this shadow life of the theatre! And its unreality was half a nightmare and half a fascinating dream. "Even when I give them back I will have worn them," thought Dory and shivered.

The presaging chord to the fourth act banished everything from Dory's excited brain but the thought of success. She wanted to go out there and sing her soul's song to those people. She could do this, she could sing and move the most adamant heart out there — ah, there would be a day when she would have that chance. It would come. It must come.

Then no more garret-room without fire — no more scanty dirty meals — no more anguishing over the wants of her loved ones. This miserable impecunious position crushed her. How many radiant spirits beat their gorgeous wings against these ugly cages of poverty all the best years of their life — before recognition brings release. And, ah, still sadder are the poor ones who beat themselves to exhaustion and dying leave behind them treasures of their souls that the world at last finds out and cherishes. They are all like some great musician dead of starvation and buried to the strains of their own immortal funeral march.

CHAPTER XI

THE first performance was over. It had proven a success. This would mean at least a month's stay in Buffalo and everybody offered thanks.

Tired out from long rehearsing, no one lost much time in getting into street clothes.

The "Dory O'Moore fall" was gossiped about in every dressing-room, some whispering it was previously arranged between the manager and the chorus girl; and Dory O'Moore's legs were talked about by everyone.

Zoe pretended to be pleased but was secretly furious and laid Dory's little success entirely to the fact of the silk tights. Their origin Dory whispered she would tell her later, adding: "And I surely won't have them tomorrow night!" "Oh my," laughed Dory as she hung up her plumed cap in the dressing-room, "if dear old Sister Sebastian could see us now, what, Zoe?"

Dropping her belt with a clank, Pearl April raised her cosmetic eyebrows. "Aw cut that Sister Sabbath Day, don't do the little convent girl stuff here, cutie . . ."

"Yes," added Avec Plazir, stopping to look up from cold cream washing, "Yes, when Sister Sabbath Day sees the O'Moore legs in the Police Gazette . . ."

This brought cries from the surrounding dressing-rooms and there were loud calls for Queenie to go and take care of the "only pair of silk tights in the whole bloomin' show."

But Queenie was very busy with a little affair of her own. Walking stealthily up the little dark passage-way, the sharp-eyed wardrobe mistress came to the wooden door marked "Stage Entrance Only." She turned its rusty bolt and swung it backwards, and peered out.

There stood a few curious shop-girls, some gamins pushing each other out of the way, and six or seven "johnnies." After looking around cautiously, Queenie beckoned to the two smartest dressed youths. One of them stepped quickly towards her.

"Who do you want to see," whispered Queenie.

The gentleman leaned on his cane and doffed his hat chivalrously. "You, fair lady," he answered.

"No kiddin' now," whispered Queenie. "I spotted you and your friend over there in the back of the box — I seen who ye had your eyes on — and I kin give you an' yer friend an introduce, see? Understand?"

The gentleman rubbed his index finger and thumb together significantly.

"You're on," whispered Queenie. "Five plunks apiece is all I ask — there's both corn feds — just off the farm — but that's up to you — see? Would you like the dark or the blonde one — I thought yer friend was just devourin' the blonde one — the way he was lookin'."

“ Righto — the dark one for me.”

“ Well,” said Queenie, “ her name’s Dory O’Moore and the other one is Zoe Sand. Stand on the corner down there — I’ll wander down with them in about an hour. Any story I put up’ll be to your interest to agree wit’. S’long! ”

The door closed. The bolt was turned.

After a little while, it opened again, and various members of the company started to file out.

Just inside the door, Queenie stopped Dory and her friend, and was confiding to them about the gentlemen outside who asked her to find two “ good-lookin’ ” girls for a big Broadway production. I’ll introduce ye — they’ll take ye to dinner and ye better go — ’cause them are the people can give ye big jobs — give ye a real chance.”

They started out — one on either side of the “ benefactress ” who planned to lead them down to the appointed corner. But as they reached the door what was her surprise to see her “ two Johnnies ” standing like two boobs right in front of the stage entrance. Surprise was quickly supplemented by fear and indignation as one of them — it was Jules Blenner — rushed forward and grasped the delighted Dory’s hand, and the other — Jack Harrington — offered his arm to Zoe.

“ Bon soir,” laughed Harrington over his shoulder to Queenie, as he bowed the girls into a waiting taxi. “ You are a good little business woman, — but be careful some day you don’t land in the coop.”

Then to the chauffeur, — “ Drive us to the Palmer.” Standing with one hand on her hip and her small black eyes like two poisoned pin points, Queenie just looked after them. She could scarcely believe it. Then to herself, she demanded: “ Well, wouldn’t that eat cher ” — and going down the street she answered herself, — “ That ’ud coitenly eat-ches, that would! Two convent girls! Pretty soft.”

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Whirling through the rainy drenched glimmering streets Dory was happy. Was she not close — close to no other than Jules Blenner?

True it was against all her resolutions. For she and Zoe had promised each other they would ignore all invitations to go out after the theatre. “ Midnight parties ” were a bugbear to run from. But this was the exception.

When Jack Harrington returned to New York and heard all the news, he persuaded his paper to send him to Buffalo on the Winston trail. And Jules, who had returned from his concert tour, decided to spend all his meager profits on accompanying Jack.

“ We just thought we’d surprise you,” said Jack. “ Is it a pleasant surprise? ”

For answer, Zoe flung back her little head and looked at him through half-closed eyes — those small, dark oriental eyes curved up a little at the corners which recalled so vividly the fascinating ones of Bella Sand. The taxi drew up at the ornamental entrance of the Palmer, and suddenly both girls became con-

scious of looking shabby, and begged to be taken somewhere less pretentious.

"Oh, don't be so foolish," protested Jules. "We'll have the prettiest girls in the dining-room — come."

"Pooh," scoffed Jack. "Every man's eyes in the place will be bulging," and in the next moment the four were standing laughing and talking in the lobby, while bowing waiters were relieving the men of their hats and coats.

"Oh, Jack, I'm so happy to see you, you're a duck to have come," sighed Zoe.

Harrington's large sensual mouth parted in an enigmatic smile, and he fixed his glasses on as he looked in Zoe's eager pale little face. "Are you, baby-child? Well, I'm going to stay the whole time the show is in Buffalo."

In spite of Harrington's youth, he was only twenty-seven, his knowledge of women was vast and dark. So he refrained from telling Zoe what a really colossal effort he had made to join her.

The brilliant lights made poor trembling, ecstatic Dory quite dizzy. The simple process of walking into the dining-room, first on one foot, then on the other, seemed a herculean feat, so conscious was she of the ludicrous grey dress. Once a smart princess frock, in the possession of Mrs. Sand, the curving seams which had followed the lines of her form — were crooked and baggy now, and the threadbare grey silk hung on Dory's slender figure like a hollow mockery. She yearned to be miraculously transformed — or swal-

lowed up, as she caught her reflection in the myriad mirrors. For the first time she had a really good look at the skirt, she had shortened herself — and surely it was unsuccessful workmanship. She saw the cheap little grey shoes woefully turned over at the high wooden heels, the once gorgeous black tulle hat, now rusty and frowsy. Like a queen she would have moved if smart clothes had covered her beautiful shell-colored body. But these rags ignominiously cheapened her appearance and realizing this her little feet shuffled apologetically.

The waiter was showing them to a table. Jules Blenner would be ashamed of her! At this thought, the little hand trembled and down went the dollar umbrella, to which for some reason she had clung.

Before she knew it, somebody had leaned over from his table, picked up the "rube parasol," and bending low his fair fat head over a pearl-studded evening shirt, was presenting the large wooden handle to her, with much ceremony. Next moment, a low cry escaped her — for Dory was looking into the pale eyes of Harry Balster. He was supping with Silvia Van Twiller. He had the wisdom not to try to force himself on Dory and the other members of the party did not speak to him as they passed his table.

Dory related the night's episode.

"Silvia is in cahoots with the wardrobe mistress," declared Jack Harrington, as he went on to tell his scene with Queenie.

"It's all that damn Balster," cried Jules. "I'll go over and break his head" — and he darted up.

But Jack restrained him and Zoe whispered — “Anyway — of course *I* haven’t any silk tights — only woolen ones, ugh! But if he’d sent them to me — I wouldn’t give him the satisfaction of sending them back after I’d worn them! ”

This threw a new light on the situation.

Then Jules suggested that Jack buy a nice silk pair for Zoe, and he should buy a pair for Dory — which she might send back in place of the ones she had worn. “The fat-head,” concluded Jules, as he glared truculently over at Balster’s back — “I can hardly keep my hands off him!”

At this, Jack Harrington dropped Zoe’s hand which he had been ardently holding under the table. He put his black-rimmed spectacles on, and leaning across the table looked steadily at the dogmatic Jules. Then very slowly, he began: “For a person with so little dough, you certainly have a lot of crust! If you have money to buy the child a silk pair of tights, you better invest it in a hat for her, my boy.” Turning to Dory, he continued: “Take all you can get from that mut — Balster — you don’t have to *see* him, you know — why, a girl like you could string a boob like him for a fortune. He’d be only too delighted to feel some of his bankroll going over to you! ”

Dory cringed, as she did the night of Mrs. Sand’s party.

“Please — just don’t talk about it any more — I’m sorry I spoke — I shouldn’t have — it’s humiliating.”

“I think Miss O’Moore can get along well without your advice, Jack — just shut up,” said Jules.

Accepting the admonishment with good nature, Jack recaptured Zoe's willing little hand and remarked in a ministerial voice — "And they that have plenty shall be given more — and they that have little shall have it taken away from them."

The waiter offered two steaming partridges on a gleaming silver platter, and at a nod from Jack, he retired to the side table and started to carve.

"Don't be nervous any more," pleaded Jules. "I'm here with you — and I'm not going to let anyone harm you." His eyes clung to Dory's dark tender ones a long moment — and their hands found each other.

The orchestra played the curious strains of a new dance, gay flowers filled the softly lighted room with their perfume. The atmosphere was warm — intoxicating — and even more intoxicating was the little god of Love who sat victorious at the dainty table.

CHAPTER XII

FOR five weeks they had been in Buffalo.

One day Dory came home very tired after a long rehearsal. Taking her shoes off she threw herself on the bed and for a long time lay there, thinking.

Jules wanted to marry her. She was in a small room on the top floor, — an attic room and one small window. The iron bedstead was double size and she and Zoe slept together. There was an oak combination dresser and wash-stand with a crooked mirror and against the wall were their two trunks. A gay calendar of a former year was pinned on the soiled papered wall, a picture of a sumptuous lady descending from her bath. A worn black pocket-book — incidentally an empty pocket-book — and a half burned candle were on a rickety table near the bed. This was poverty.

Yet, when Jules came to the equally bare and ugly parlor downstairs, she was happy — inexpressibly happy. One look from his dark eyes thrilled her and luxury became an indifferent triviality. One word from his curved lips interested her as no other man's conversation — however rich — could interest her. And when he kissed her the whole world was forgotten.

That morning she had just five cents left. Stopping at a lunch counter across from the theatre, she ordered a cup of coffee and climbed up on the high stool to enjoy her breakfast. A very thick cup of steaming liquid was set before her by a "plug-ugly" waiter.

"Ooo," cried Dory — "please —" as she looked in the cup, "I have a fly in this coffee!"

The man planted his hands on his hips and glared at her. "Well, ye got a spoon to take it out, ain't ye?" He kept his brows elevated and batted his scarce eyelashes as he patiently waited an answer.

If Dory had had another five cents she would have laughed at this typical "stage tough" — and if she had been strong and rested she would have lustily demanded another cup or the money back. Being penniless and exhausted, she slipped off the stool and bolted for the door thanking heaven for her safe exit. Then carefully balancing the jarred stomach, she made her way to rehearsal as best she could.

Jules and Jack had not asked them for lunch, probably for the same reason that Dory partook not of breakfast. But when Zoe and Dory met in their attic room, there was that basket of fruit. The remittance had been sent home to Mommie Sand — lodging had been paid for — neither of the girls had a cent, both had empty stomachs and there on the table was a marvellous basket of real ripe fruit!

"You see, it's from Balster," said Dory, as she furtively picked off one grape.

"He's certainly a tireless swain," remarked Zoe as she picked off two grapes.

"Of course I'll send the thing back to him," said Dory as she tasted a raisin.

By this time Zoe was in the depths of a big mealy banana.

"Of course," she said.

"I'm ghastly hungry," sighed Dory. "Mm — this is the sweetest fig — ambrosial, my dear —" then as she took another one, — "I was beginning to have a hollow ache — I never appreciated the pangs of hunger before — awful! "

Without stopping to talk, Zoe handed her a banana while eating another one herself.

This proved filling — yes, satisfying — and now Dory's conscience cried out even as her stomach had before.

"I'll send the rest of it back. Gee — Zodie, we've eaten a lot of it! "

Zoe wiped the large formless mouth and settled down to a half hour or so of digesting. "Send it back! " she scoffed. "You'll do nothing of the kind — take all you can get from him — Jules hasn't anything! Jack gave you very good advice. *Work* Harry Balster for all he's worth. I wish to jingo I had someone I could work — no such luck! "

"But you know Jack would object just as Jules would to my really doing it — anyway, I hate the man and I refuse to accept anything from him! Oh, why did we eat that fruit —" then a little gleam of humor came to her eyes — "as Jack would say — ain't nature wonderful! "

“ Well,” said Zoe, “ Jack is very nice — but he has no money — it’s easy enough to *know* someone you like — I know I’m crazy about Jack, but it makes me sick, this poverty stricken kind of business for a girl like me! As for you, Dory — you’re a fool not to encourage Balster — marry him if you like . . .”

“ What! — Ugh ” — Dory shivered and made a moue.

“ Well, — I mean if you have to be respectable — that would give you a stronger hold on him — it’s a cinch Mother would have married him if she could — and — well, Jules will always be crazy about you, Dory. It would be a wonderful combination, — money and love! ”

“ You don’t know what you’re saying, Zoe — soon we’ll have had stage experience enough and can get better jobs — then you won’t feel so bitter towards things.”

A few days later came another basket of fruit. Dory arrived in the parlor to find Jack and Zoe generously partaking of it in a carefree, childish fashion.

“ Jack, do you realize Balster sent me that stuff? ”

Jack fixed his spectacles with that superior gesture he had and pulled her down beside him — “ Surely you’re being faithful to him, kiddie? ”

“ You must be serious — ”

“ I am. You’re looking very pale; my, what violet shadows under the baby’s big brown eyes — have an orange, it’ll do you good. Now settle down — we’ll

all have a nice cozy feed and don't think about anything awful."

But visualized in Dory's mind was the red bulging forehead, the white eyebrows and pale blue eyes — the fat nose and weak twitching mouth of Balster as he swooped down upon her from a superior position, and this time she did not taste the fruit.

That night a note came from him.

"My dear Dory: —

"Did you enjoy my offering? Why not send me a line? As you know I passed you in my car today — you would not bow to me — but you looked so weary I wanted to lift you right in and fly off with you. Why not be sensible? Come to me, I'll teach you to love me, but whatever you do, don't make the mistake of marrying Jules Blenner — a man without money is bad — but a musician without necessities is hell let loose! Stop all this nonsense about 'a girl can face the world and earn her living and happiness.' You are tired of the struggle already if you will let yourself realize it. Come to me, I'll make you — Queen. As Mrs. Balster you shall have every luxury and gradually you will grow to love me for it.

Yours —

"Harry B."

And Balster could not conceive of any woman refusing these things. For what was the world coming to when a rich man could not lie back and select any poor woman he deigned to desire? Had not men always bought women? The ideas this child had about

equal strength, facing the world and earning a living, caused him to roll his big head around in glee.

Upon these incidents Dory reflected as she lay upon the humble little bed. It was good to be alone. In her dream she could see the dear form of Jules — see his dark eyes — and the charming way they had of mutely telling their love to hers. Then she would plan a way for their future together. Very practical and wise she would be for a while — then gradually nebulous and back to her dream.

At last she rose and went over to the mirror.

“Miss O’Moore,” came the nasal voice of the landlady from the floor below — “Miss O’Moore — a gentleman to see you — a Mr. Blenner, he says.”

Twisting a curl on her pale forehead, Dory addressed herself to the mirror. “A regular woman marries the man she loves. I want to be what Jack calls a good sport — so I’ll earn my own living since Jules can’t do it for me — and I’ll marry him — ” A little powder on the Greek nose — and yes, it was the habit of the theatre — a little rouge on the tender mouth. “I’ll never settle down to stagnate and live off anybody — never! Not me! ” And she tripped down the stairs to a strange little tune her heart seemed to sing — “A real woman marries the man she loves — a real woman marries the man she loves! ”

CHAPTER XIII

THREE days later the Eliot Opera Company were to leave Buffalo for Washington on the 10 A.M. train.

At half past nine, Mr. Eliot stood breathless on the boarding-house doorstep. The landlady, she of the nasal voice, appeared in full armor of rag curlers and cold cream and demanded, "What wuz eatin' him to make him stand an' ring a bell fifteen times in one minute."

"I am the gentleman who just telephoned you about members of my company — Miss O'Moore and Miss Sand — you're sure they're not here? We leave in half an hour. I have a personal interest in Miss O'Moore, will you let me go to her room — I may discover some traces."

"Come in."

The landlady pursed her lips and stared in solemn wrath at the anxious manager. "She ain't here now — an' she wuzn't here all night — her trunk is nothin' to me — but she ain't paid her bill — I know that! "

Just as Mr. Eliot made for the stairs, a hansom drew up with a man, and out fluttered — Dory!

"Oh — Mr. Eliot! "

Quickly he drew her into the parlor. "What does this mean? "

“ I — I — ”

“ If I ever met a woman I could swear was decent, it was you — now look at you — your mother — ”

At the magical word “ mother ” — she tiptoed to whisper, “ Don’t tell — it’s to be a secret. I am married — I was married last night! ” And reaching in her hand-bag, she produced her certificate.

“ Are you going to quit the show? ”

“ No,” gasped Dory. “ I can’t afford that — I’ll run upstairs now — it won’t take me a second — you’ll forgive me for being late on my — marriage morning? And you won’t tell — and — ”

“ I’ll give you five minutes.”

Just as Dory turned towards the stairs another hansom drew up and out came Zoe!

Whereat Dory stopped still in utter amazement. “ Zoe! — where did you come from? Didn’t you come home last night — Zoe? ”

“ Come from! ” broke in the landlady. “ The dirty — little slut — where do you suppose she come from — from church? ”

Dory gathered her friend in her arms. “ Zoe darling — you told me you were coming home — ” she whispered. “ Are you married too? Is that it? ”

But Zoe pushed her gently away, her small black eyes were brilliant, her skin showed not a trace of color but the large formless mouth was painted scarlet. She pursed it a little and the delicate nostrils dilated as she answered, “ Of course not! ”

“ Please pay your rent and leave this house — the

two o' ye," shrieked the landlady, her curl-papers fairly bristled with her rage. "This is a respectable house — always wuz respectable till now — an' — "

Zoe threw her a five-dollar bill.

"Miss Sand," said Mr. Eliot, "you have ten minutes in which to get to the theatre, or I must ask you not to come at all! "

At this reprimand, Zoe drew herself up and informed Mr. Eliot she had no intention whatever of going to the theatre at all.

Again Dory threw her arms around her. "Zoe, don't leave me," she cried. "I never needed you so badly — don't leave me now, Zodie! "

But Mr. Eliot intervened. "Come, come, I've no time for this, Dory, you leave immediately with me — or stay with your crowd here — decide at once! "

Dory leapt up the stairs and in a few minutes a woe-begone little creature came down on that bright May wedding morning. In four large newspaper bundles were her extra belongings, a pink stage hat half bursting through one of them, and a green cloth cape through another. And peering over the packages was a pair of purple brown eyes, vainly trying to see the steps.

Jules jumped out of the hansom as she appeared. But Mr. Eliot stood in white fury holding open the door of a taxi. "You have not a moment, Miss O'Moore, if you're coming with the show."

Jules bent and kissed the quivering lips and ignoring

Eliot started to help his wife in the hansom. But at that moment “ *You must earn your own living* ” appeared in letters of red before Dory’s eyes, and clasping the big silly packages she piled into the taxi, with Mr. Eliot and drove off.

CHAPTER XIV

IT WAS George Bragdon, the fat comedian, who came and sat with Dory in the train, and now and then held her cold hand in his while Dory gazed down on the enormous diamond on his small finger ring, and tried to answer his kindly stupid questions.

“What’s the trouble, kiddie?” He made his mouth look like a button and sank his chin in two or three rolls of fat neck, and he cocked his head to hear her whisper and widened his eyes.

But answers became more and more inarticulate and finally when Bragdon was in the midst of a soft speech — he was saying, “Many girls have come to me with their troubles in my time — I’ve been on the road for twenty-five years — and I’ve been a father and brother to those girls and —” behold Dory’s auburn coils touched his shoulder — she was fast asleep!

Upon arriving George offered the fruit of his experience in showing them to a *nice* boarding-house — sounds paradoxical, but truth is a strange thing. This rambling wooden structure was one block from the theatre, and had everything in its favor except that it demanded the exorbitant rent of eight dollars a week for a room. But Dory had slept and there were no longer any real obstacles in her way. Before long it was arranged that Fannie Bliss, the little widow, Pearl

April, the big-nosed little pony, and Dory should share the room.

And downstairs in great splendor on the first floor front lived old "Papa Bragdon," the comedian.

That night after the performance the girls were unpacking their trunks when George appeared armed with his chafing-dish, two bottles of beer and ingredients for a Welsh-rabbit, and never was a Pasha received with more dancing joy. He made Dory lie down, covered her up with a quilt, gave the "beero" to Pearl to open, the packages to Fannie, while he prepared the rabbit, fussing over it like an old lady.

And Dory looked out of hazy eyes thanking heaven for this genial atmosphere and vainly trying to grasp some of the details of the last few days.

Jack Harrington and Zoe had been witnesses to her marriage. Then they had all gone to Palmer's, and had supper, and when she and Jules registered as Mr. and Mrs. Blenner, Zoe kissed her and told her she was tired and wanted to go straight back to their boarding-house. The solemn man had given her a certificate which gave her a right to be with Jules that night — and forever. But Zoe?

Loving Zoe gave Dory a keen intuition in regard to her, and she knew that harm had come to her — harm of the most pernicious kind.

Still in the grey dress, silky brown curls over her pale face, the flowered cotton comforter around her, she lay a little bundle of emotion on the bed. It had been a wonderful, never-to-be-forgotten night with

Jules — but harm, harm had come to Zoe, and she felt as ineffectual as a lost puppy.

This was the first of many cozy times at the Washington boarding-house, when George shared their supper and they enjoyed his fat harmless jocundity. He would tell them of the audiences he had captured from here to 'Frisco. Pearl April, who had an unquenchable ambition to be a clog-dancer with a team in vaudeville, would get up on the table and dance for them, the tiny feet with their bright green stockings, clapping on the table like a pair of gay castanets and Fannie would show new pictures of her babies. Dory was loved and petted, and there was no more contented man in Washington than Bragdon as he would bid them good-night after the little supper and steal quietly downstairs to his first floor front, and a night of calm uninterrupted snoring.

They had been playing five weeks in Washington to unsatisfactory houses, and now for two weeks, everyone had received only half salary.

On exquisitely stamped stationery Zoe had written an enigmatic note to Dory telling her not to send the remittance to "Mommie" Sand, since they had had a stroke of luck and no longer needed any money. This strange sudden good fortune mystified Dory and caused her to have graver doubts than ever. Also a yearning to return to New York — see her friend — and ah! to see Jules for even a day.

But Jules had no money. He deplored this fact in every letter, begging his wife to take care of her-

self, and not worry. Dory wrote him bright little missives telling only the pleasant things and omitting the fact that salaries were decreasing.

But poverty was pinching the trio of chorus girls more and more every day. Pearl fairly withered under it. Wringing her thin hands she confided to the girls she had to send money to her old father who sold toys on 34th Street. She told them how she loved him and wanted to "hel-up him" in her earnestness reverting to Semitic type. "He iss good. Ven effer I send him money" — Pearl squinted her eyes and humped her back till she looked like a ludicrous old Jewish crone, — "he safes it fer a house — a bungalow in de country. V'y? He iss buying it fer me — an' I kin live when I'm out of work!"

"What's the matter with you, Pearl — you look like a kike," laughed Fannie. "You're not the only one to get singed!"

Whereat Pearl laughed, straightened herself, ceased the atavistic moaning and picking up her skirt, turned the funny little feet in and did an absurd clog dance. "Be that as it may, we'll have to laugh and dance an' sing in our unaffected way," she sang and came just then a tap at the door; it opened and the comic Irish face of Avec Plazir appeared.

"Hello, goils."

As usual, Avec was resplendent; this time she wore a slightly soiled, elaborately embroidered white linen dress, and a brilliant futurist sash embraced her trim waist. On her newly dyed yellow hair, sat a Louis

Quinze hat of leghorn, defying the world and bristling with strange plumage.

"What's that 'brain-storm' you've got on your head?" asked Dory and laughed as she went over and put her rounded arm around Avec. "You have such a piquant face, that if you'd take those feathers off, and just have one rose, you'd look like a lady of the quinzième siècle."

"Now ain't she the jealous cat?" remarked Avec. "Such names to call a poison!"

"No," said Dory, "without the feathers you'd look chic enough to be a Broadway show girl!"

"Well," responded Avec, "I wuz a Broadway show girl once an' I know all about it. You have t' live up to it all the time. Goils, ye can give me the comforts of a third-rate show like this — where people are so afraid of losin' you they treat ye decent!"

"Oh, my!" sighed Pearl, her eyes glistening like a young barbarian's, still gazing rapturously at Avec's preposterous hat. "Can't you see they're cock feathers? Let me try it on, hey — Avec?" and Pearl held out her slim hand avidly.

Avec seated herself on a trunk, pulled a bored expression, and opened her cigarette case. At last her moment of revenge had come! How many times had Pearl April insinuated there was a lack of soap in her life? Now she shot out her question: "When wuz yer hair washed, Poil?" she asked, and made the inquiry most rudely significant.

Glaring truculently, words failed poor Pearl.

A soprano-voiced riot was imminent, but Dory went over and put her hand on Avec's. "We didn't mean it," she said, "and don't let's be sarcastic or anything today. We've just been consoling each other about being on half pay. I suppose we're lucky to have that — except I had to pay for a new pair of slippers and I only have five dollars between me and starvation."

"Well," demanded Avec innocently, "what's the matter with a pretty girl like you — oh —" a light dawned on her. "I remember — yer not allowed to have no company in this house."

"Well?" demanded Pearl, as she frizzed a strand of her dark faded hair.

"Well," answered Avec, "in *my* house it's only six dollars a week fer a room to yourself — and ye kin have all the 'privileges' ye want!"

"What privileges?" asked Dory.

"Well, big eyes — that musician hangin' around you in Baltimore wuz a privilege if ye must know."

"Shut up, Avec," cried Fannie. "I mean that. None of that kind of talk around here."

"Don't you insinuate that I'm not as good as you, Fanny Bliss, or you, or you, Dory O'Moore — you might be hangin' on to virginity — but take it from me, when it comes to a show-down — ye'd never miss it — on a dark and stormy night with a empty stomach and bum clothes — it ain't worth that! Men 'er the people as runs this country — they keeps the wages high fer themselves and low fer women — and as long as they hev the coin they can buy women."

Dory had returned to her chair and sat rocking back and forth in vague repulsion. Avec's philosophy was the same as Harry Balster's. In her vulgar speech there were undeniable half-truths. Finally Avec rose grandly, and leaning on her cerise parasol continued — "I hoid sounds of gaiety outside, so as I wuz all togged out in glad rags, I thought I'd come in an' give you goils a treat an'," Avec gazed around, "signs of gaiety," she scoffed, "and wot do I do I find but three poverty-struck maidens! "

Here again Pearl stood up, glared truculently and failed to utter more than a gasp.

"As fer you, Poil April, Rebecca er whatever yer name is," Avec pointed the gay parasol in contemptuous wrath — "You're like nothing I've yet 'hoid' of! " And with that, Avec made an effective exit, slamming the door so that it jarred the whole big house.

"She's a wild-cat, all right," remarked Fannie.

"Poor thing," said Dory. "We'd probably be wild too, if we led her kind of life and times being hard for us means . . . they're doubly hard for her."

To Dory, Avec Plaizir's hard eyes and calculating mouth told the story of her crushed cringing soul — a weak soul entirely subjugated by wilful heavy flesh. She had had no spiritual training as a child — that was the pitiful thing, and Dory always compassionated everything that was ignorant. Of course Zoe had had her training, but it had been counteracted by the example at home. Poor Zoe! Her letters written on expensive stationery filled Dory with ominous fears.

If she might only go to New York. But no work was there for her. Jules wrote, "Shows are closing all around town and the others want only *trained* people. I could not have you be a mere chorus girl on Broadway — Darling, it would ruin both of us! "

Trained! That was it. She and Zoe had been trained to be little ladies — to sew a little, cook a little, sing a little, play a little! There had been no concentration on a marketable profession. And should they find themselves in an impecunious position, what did the light accomplishments avail them? She might go and be a seamstress — that is what Sister Sebastian would say, and she would be quite right. That is what many would be happy doing. But Dory's wings fluttered in imagination against the wires of a cramped dark little cage when she thought of that. They were meant to lift her through life, those wings, not to beat and bruise her against unnatural prison-walls. But Dory remembered Sister Sebastian's lack of sagacity when she begged to be permitted to go to a training school for the stage. It was unwomanly, and — "Fear not, dear child — God will send you a good husband — or a vocation." "But I want to go out in the world and be an individual or a great person like my mother." Then the wistful nun stroked the head of her quixotic little girl pupil and sent her into the embroidery class.

Now she had married her mate physically — mentally — and she could not take her place at his side, for though her talents equaled his, her training was deficient. She was a lady.

So she trudged along with people who had no desire to rise — whose very souls — like Avec's, cringed from anything but "the comforts of a third rate show," while her own spirit yearned to soar into the air of art, but she was powerless.

Seating herself in the Boston rocker in a corner, Dory took up the typewritten part Mr. Eliot had given her to understudy, and started to memorize it.

The three girls settled down to their respective occupations. But before long Fanny held them rapt with the story of her two children and their charming little ways. "An' to think," sighed Fannie, "that they can't have enough to *eat* when I'm not getting paid! "

"That certainly is hard lines," sighed Pearl — "when it's a question o' kids bein' hungry — money — "

Leaning over from the rocker where she sat, Dory petted Fannie's arm and kissed her cheek. "I have four dollars saved up, Fan — you can have it for the kids — send it off to-day."

"My! Your hand feels hot! " cried Fannie — she felt Dory's head. "Have you got a headache, Dory? "

Then for some strange reason Dory felt big warm tears coursing down her cheeks and soon in Fannie's arms she was crying softly, her whole body quivering with the silent sobs. And towards night Dory's fever increased and she lay tortured by fears of she knew not what, while Pearl and Fannie went to the evening performance.

Hearing a creak on the stairs, she darted up to see if the door was closed. But fear froze the blood in her veins as she crouched near her pillow, half expecting some monster to steal cautiously in and slay her.

No sooner had she recovered from this, than the window rattled. Surely that was more than the wind. She peered over the covers. And the bovine countenance of Harry Balster seemed to emerge slowly into the room. Once on the ground, he grew to heroic size. Indeed he reached the ceiling. Then as Dory plunged her head under the covers, he became small as 'hop-o'-me-thumb' and shook his little finger at her. Efforts to shut out these visions were futile. Harry Balster kept appearing, growing large and small during the two hours she was alone.

When the girls returned at eleven, with the jocund George Bragdon, Dory declared she was much better. For in truth human companionship came as a blessed anodyne after the loneliness and terror of the past two hours.

George felt Dory's uneven pulse more professionally than a surgeon. Then shaking his elephantine hand, he promptly diagnosed the case as biliousness, and prescribed a mild cathartic, with a cup of hot bouillon which he would then make, and in the morning a blue pill!

But in the morning Dory was seized with such violent nausea, that Fanny summoned a doctor.

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“ You are *not* married? ” asked the doctor for the second time.

“ No, no,” replied Dory. “ That is — ”

But he was so sympathetic. One of those big men who come into a sick room quietly — sit beside the bed as if all the day were at his disposal, and permeate the place with quiet — and the patient with confidence.

“ Because,” he said, “ don’t be frightened,” his voice lowered to a whisper, “ you are with child.”

Closing her eyes and hugging her knees in the old way, Dory tried to realize the full meaning of it. She was frightened for a moment — then strangely happy.

“ Are you sure? ” she asked.

“ Perfectly.”

“ I — I don’t know what to do — I must have time to think — Doctor? ”

“ Yes, dear, don’t be nervous, — relax — I’ll just write a prescription.”

“ Doctor! ”

Raising his eyebrows over tired kind grey eyes, he smiled, “ Yes? ”

“ D — don’t tell the girls here — don’t tell anybody, will you? ”

“ No — no — but you ought to get out of here — I shouldn’t advise you to dance around too much — if you were a principal, it would be different — you might go on working for five or six months, — but they don’t have any consideration for you chorus girls — ”

Dory’s natural acumen seemed to have left her.

The curved lips drooped as she looked at the doctor with softly-lighted troubled eyes.

“He must be a low dog, the man who caused this — why won’t he marry you?” exclaimed the doctor suddenly.

This brought exactly the reaction he anticipated.

Drawing him over near her, Dory whispered, “Never tell anyone — but I *am* married. You please mustn’t think he’s not nice. He’s the dearest — dearest boy in the world. His father’s rich — but he’s poor — very poor — and — and later on he will have prepared his father — and I’m to have a part later on in a New York show — he’s going to get it for me after I’ve had experience — and be a real actress — but now — ”

The doctor unclined her hands which had become very hot again, and laid her softly down on the bed.

“Oh — I see. Well, you take my advice — you go to your husband. Keep it secret if you like — get a job which will be easier — but a woman in your condition should be near someone who loves her, — should be near the father of her child. And — now you must nourish this baby — good simple things — no red meat or fancy sweet things, but chicken, fish — plenty of green vegetables, milk and fruit.”

Again Dory closed the dark-lashed eyes as she lay on her back, her hands spread on the coverlet like petals of a white flower. She felt a moment of quivering happiness. The miracle of motherhood! She wished the doctor would tell her again in that confiden-

tial important way what to feed "this baby." Ah, again her being thrilled at the thought of her child — a little warm bundle depending blindly — utterly upon her to feed its baby mouth! A tiny mouth curved like Jules'? A tiny head like Jules' nestling beneath her heart? Unbelievable wonderness.

The doctor had put his instruments back in the bag and stood smiling quietly, near the bed. He petted the silken brown curls. "You're only a child yourself — there — there. Now you take this medicine as soon as possible — I'll send it in to you — and relax and don't worry. Everything is all right." He turned to go. "Eat enough to nourish that baby! "

When Fannie returned, she brought up the filled prescription. And Dory's glowing eyes and smiling lips were eloquent of her recovery.

Obedying the doctor's orders, Fannie went quietly about the room — gave the patient her medicine and refrained from conversation.

Relaxation brought Dory into her dream world. A pleasant world of beautiful things which all may have who invoke it. As her eyes closed, she was in the garden of a little house just outside of the clanging town — her home with Jules it was. A faded red brick path led from the quaint green door — a time-worn old path bordered with radiant Japanese irises. It wound its way through the garden to a trellised summer house — where they were going to have tea — she and her lover Jules — so slender, he looked, so frail! She saw the beloved curve of his chin, his exquisite

nose, and his eyes were dark with love thoughts. Ah, he was there — waiting, smiling, his tender boyish smile — and the dainty roses, a luxurious tangle on the trellis work, were his background. Hurrying towards him — the scented summer wind stirred her hair and the flowered organdie of her dress. “My Dory!” he murmured. “You have told the maid there will be four people to tea? Ah, I’m so proud of you — girl dear — Father will think you more beautiful than ever to-day — I know I do!”

She gathered the silk shawl closer about her shoulders.

“You’re sure — my — I don’t look too — strange, Jules?”

But she was assured with his adorable smile —

“What if you did! Father is delighted — it’s mainly because of the baby to come that he’s helping us!”

Then she closed her eyes while his warm lips seemed to kiss them long — tenderly kissed her eyes and hair and mouth — she sighed.

Clang! An awakening. The scene was reset quite suddenly in the gloomy boarding-house room.

“I told you not to ring that bell,” whispered Fannie to the slavey that brought the mail. “Ain’t you the mean thing!”

“A letter for Miss O’Moore,” responded the slavey.

“A letter for me?” asked Dory, as she reached out eagerly and hastily tore it open. From Jules! Perhaps luck had turned — he may have sold his operetta

— or who knows — he may have found a position for her in New York. Her pointed fingers trembled as she drew out the long missive. To a person out of love it sounds a silly letter. But to one of the people who are basking in that God's favor — it is a missive full of intimate eloquence.

“ You precious girl: —

“ Do I love you better than anyone else in the world? Why, my darling! A thousand times yes! And you know it. How can you ever let a thought of anything else cross your mind? ”

“ This forced separation maddens me — I feel like going out and digging ditches — people who do that can at least afford to have their wives with them. I'm disconsolate and the air is indigo blue around me. The thought of your working in that cheap company — with a lot of rotten cats, drives me almost frantic. I don't seem to be able to get money anywhere. But cheer up, darling, luck can't be down all the time. If there were only some way of talking to Father! He's educated me as a musician — I am a musician — it is *not* a lucrative profession. The music business requires much backing before money can be made. But he is adamant — he is more unapproachable than ever.

“ Your idea of my teaching is a very wise one. It never occurred to me before! I had always thought somehow — that if one teaches one settles down to mediocrity and to failure. But as you say — when I am booked for a concert tour, my pupils can jolly well

wait for me till I come back. I've just put my last \$10 into the 'Musical Topics,' for an advertisement. And Felix's wife, who has always been a good friend of mine, is going to see what she can do to get me pupils.

"Now don't you worry — dear little soft dove — about 'other women' who will fall in love with me when I play — beautiful women, eh? — Dory girl — you are the only really beautiful woman in the world — you! you! you — my wife — do you know what that means to a man like me? You — I more than love — you I respect and adore! Why can't I make you feel the all-enveloping, all-absorbing, big, perfect, normal love I have for you! I want you to feel the same great supreme confidence I do for you — I want you to feel as if I were your haven of comfort and rest. You can prove your love for me by being a brave dear one and know in your heart I am trying to end this separation of ours just as hard as you are. Of course for the moment there is no possibility. We should only mess things up — perhaps inextricably by attempting to show our cards, now.

"In the future we shall have as little separation as possible to make up for this — but oh God, how I want you now!

"Dory darling, in these charming day dreams of yours put that dear silky bronze head on my shoulder and snuggle up close in my arms. I can smell the scent of your hair in my nostrils and feel the sweet warmth of you near me. Ah, dear one, there will

be no more troubles soon! Give me a kiss, you precious thing, and get a big sleep — there now. Good-night, dear.

“Your Jules.”

Tap-tap at the door. Dropping her sewing, Fanny ran to open it.

Again it was the slavey who announced in a piercing thin voice, “Mrs. Schultz sez I’m not to come down without the rent from Miss O’Moore. She sez every one ’es paid but her.”

In truth Dory had forgotten all about the last two weeks’ rent. That accounted for having five dollars to lend her friend. “Oh, — Fanny,” she said. “Do you mind giving me my pocket-book?” She laughed away the lump that formed hard in her throat. Smiling — “That is how I had five dollars extra — I thought it was funny — I — ”

“Well, ye owe *four* to Mrs. Schultz,” remarked the slavey — she of the businesslike manner, gingham apron and curl-papers. “She wants it right away, too. She sez the gas-man hez to be paid — and she sez — ”

“Oh, here it is,” laughed Dory — “if I were a millionaire I’d tip you for being such a conscientious little messenger . . .”

“As it is,” concluded Fannie, “bring back the change as quick as you can!” Then stroking Dory’s forehead gently, Fannie bade her lie down and rest quietly.

“Yes,” said Dory, the fact of her empty pocket-book now well in her mind, — “yes, Fan, because I

must get up and go to the theatre to-night — I — I feel much better, Fan. I — I can't afford to be fined for not appearing — I must — ”

“ But you still look a little feverish, dear — better stay in bed a few days more — an ounce of precaution is worth a pound of cure.”

“ Oh no — it's imperative that I go — I — ”

The rest was unnecessary, for all too well did Fannie understand the luxury of recuperating in bed is not for an honest chorus girl. “ Then you must eat something — some eggs and a cup of tea and — ”

“ Yes, but go easy, Fan, that dollar has to last till — I get paid again — I — ” but the tears welled up in her throat. Clutching her cherished letter closer under the covers, she smiled bravely with her lips, but those brooding eyes held in them the truth and it touched Fannie's sympathetic heart.

“ Well,” said Fannie, “ we'll figure it out. Now there's rice and milk is cheap and let's see — ”

“ Yes — yes,” said Dory eagerly. “ Rice and milk are very nourishing, aren't they, Fannie? I must have nourishing — ” just then a tap at the door. The landlord's tap-tap. Is there anything worse in hard times? “ That little skinflint won't get her sharp nose in this time,” said Fannie. Laying the pad and pencil with much finality on the table she went to answer. Lo! there met her eyes a rare sight — a round-faced, red-faced messenger boy stood holding a huge basket of fruit.

“ Just in the nick of time,” said Fannie.

"It always is," sighed Dory.

"Well, you don't seem very delighted. I suppose whoever sent it — here's the card, a Mr. Balster — 'best wishes for a speedy recovery!' I suppose you don't like him, whoever he is!" By this time, Fannie was busily unwrapping a box of fresh eggs that she found just under a heavy cluster of dark grapes. "But," continued she — "we'll like his food — you bet, whoever he is! I'll tell you that."

"I really ought to send it back, Fan," Dory sighed as she fell against her pillow and gazed at the splendid basket with solemn wistful eyes. "But there's something funny about that fruit. It's like a person — the temptress of St. Anthony or something. When I'm at rock-bottom it turns up always more alluring at that moment than any — anything! and I've *never* had character enough to resist it!"

"Let me tell you something, dearie, — there's no such thing as character on an empty stomach" — Fannie cracked the white stamped egg into the chafing-dish. "Character flees from an empty stomach like the devil from holy water!"

Dory wondered what her friend would say if she should tell her the whole truth!

"That baby" was so wildly hungry and the first meal she gave it consciously, was mingled with ecstatic pleasure and sinister fears. And realizing that she and Jules' child were being fed by Harry Balster made life nothing short of weird. She longed to pour out the whole story to Fannie, this sympa-

thetic friend of the fussy hair, pulled-in waist, large motherly breast, and ever-ready aphorisms, hungering for talk about babies and things maternal with a mother. But Jules would not like it. Jules had asked her under no condition to tell anyone of their marriage. Then a new fear came — suppose Jules should not want — the baby? Her heart went sad and she must have turned quite pale for quickly Fannie gave her some medicine and then fed her the nice hot lunch.

“Ah, heigh-ho!” sighed Dory. “My tummy feels much better now — though I’d hate Harry Balster to know about it — yet —” The girl made a little moue. “I must give him credit for being the hand of God at times in my life — in the form of a basket of food!”

“Well,” Fannie was scraping the dishes — her freckled face slightly flushed from the unexpected repast. “Don’t you worry about anything now” — Fannie stopped — her arms akimbo and grey eyes staring. “Suppose you wuz like me and had two kids to support! Ha! Then you’d have trouble — why sometimes I think they haven’t enough to eat — or somethin’s the trouble an’ I nearly go out of my mind. You have no one but yourself to think about! Cheer up! cutie!” Fannie shook her head. “You don’t know wot trouble is, you don’t!”

Dory felt beneath her heart vaguely — tenderly patting the soft ivory skin. “Would you give one of your babies away to someone — who’d — perhaps give you a lot of money for one?”

"Oh," gasped Fannie, "Give away one — never — why" — the plain face lighted up beneath the frizzy light brown hair — "why if you wuz to see Donnie — his name's John ye know, but his sister called him 'Donnie' — so we do. Oh — there's a cute little feller for you! His eyes is as big as saucers — reely — no exaggeration, the finest boy I ever seen — an' when I go home I'm glad to see them kids I kin tell you, dearie. I wouldn't give my Mazie or my Donnie for a million dollars, I wouldn't."

"Well, then — why do you envy me for being alone?"

"Oh, that's different — when ye don't have 'em — ye don't miss 'em, and ye suttently have an easier time of it." Fannie wrung out the dish towel — then stopped and added in a ministerial tone she kept for her cherished aphorisms: "Ye may not have 'em to bring ye joy — but it's sure then, they'd bring ye no tears, neither — and that's an old sayin' and it's a true one, it is! An' husbands is no joke neither, dearie — husbands is men — after all — an' no matter how much a woman does for 'em they look down on her — that's why women want the vote, ye can't blame them fer it — dearie. No one can't blame 'em."

Hearing a knock, Fannie went to open. There was a whispered conversation with the 'slavey.' "Excuse me a minute, dearie — are ye all right till I come up?"

On the affirmative Fannie tossed her apron on a chair and went out.

Presently she returned — “Now dearie — who do you think that wuz? — Not the musician fellow as I think you’re kind o’ daffy about — ”

“Fannie, tell me at once. Is it a man called Harry Balster? Tell me! I won’t see him — why did I eat that stuff he sent? O — oo — ”

But Fannie went over and sat on the bed. Having flown downstairs to see “a friend who wanted to ask her just how serious was Miss O’Moore’s condition,” she had met a genial, very well-groomed, tall, stout gentleman, who introduced himself as Mr. Balster. He impressed her with his respectful anxiety and persuaded her to intercede for him — a person who appreciated Miss O’Moore’s beauty and talent and wished to be nothing more than an ‘artistic father’ — if she would but permit him to help her.

“Miss O’Moore and I have had a misunderstanding and I feel I must have a personal interview with her. You,” he said to the fluttering Fannie, “I can see are a young woman of discretion and can understand such an interview would be to Miss O’Moore’s advantage.”

The flattered girl sat on the lumpy bed, determined to be successful in her mission. For would it not be best for her beloved Dory?

“Now, dearie,” she began, “you *did* eat the fruit, there’s no use in talkin’, — you done it. And the man that sent it to you may have had a misunderstanding with you — like he sez, but take it from me, dearie, he didn’t mean it — an’ if I ever met a

elegant han'some gentleman in my life, he's it! Such a fine big head! And skin like a baby's. We don't git many friendships in this life — so when anyone is inclined that way — as respectful as he is — try to overlook their faults, dearie — and remember — ” Fannie paused while she gathered force and diction for an especially beloved aphorism — “ A friend in need is a friend indeed! An' a rich man can help, dearie, never ferget that a woman kin always use a rich man, just as a rich man kin want a pretty woman like you are, dearie.”

Dory lay back on her pillows. The pale proud mouth drooped. She begged Fannie not to let him in. But before she knew it Balster was standing over her, clasping her hand in his soft clammy one, and immediately terror shook her form so that her teeth chattered.

“ I want to help you, Dory,” he was saying.

“ But — but listen to me — I appreciate this kind offer and all that — but — ”

“ Now — ” Balster waved away all obstruction with one sweeping gesture — “ there's nothing for you to do but accept — there's not another man in the world who'd do this kind of thing — if you don't love me I don't give a da — I don't care! ”

“ But — He — ”

Another obliterating gesture as he turned his enormous body on the little squeaking chair — “ When you're ready to go on the Broadway stage, I have lots of money and I'm a politician. You get

the best there is — I'm a politician, Dory — they're the people who make the laws."

Dory sat up in bed feeling faint and fearful of Balster as he quivered with his platonic passion for her. She called the faithful listening Fannie, "Give me a little medicine, please, dear."

Fannie complied — smiling on Mr. Balster — then returned to her post just outside the door. "You must let me talk now, Harry. I'm going to confide in you — utterly."

"Yes, dear, tell me everything — that's what I'm going to do to you, too." He wiped the perspiration off his alarmingly red brow and gazed at her with that love-sick, hang-dog expression.

Clenching her hands beneath the covers, Dory began —

"Harry — you know Jules Blenner?"

"Yes, yes — I know that whole crowd. I know Blenner and that little reporter Harrington and Felix Strange who used to come to the house so much and funny enough — the best friend I have is Mrs. Felix Strange" — and pride swelled his throat as he mentioned the name of the society leader.

"Oh, really — is she nice?" The girl leaned forward eagerly. "I've never met her!"

"Of course you haven't. Felix takes good care not to introduce any of the Sand crowd to his wife — even though he doesn't care a rap for her. Of course Jules knows her — he being Felix's cousin. Now there's the crowd we'll move in, Dory — that's real class — it's —"

“Is — is she beautiful?” For some reason Dory felt very curious about this woman.

“Oh yes — wonderful — the vampire type, you know — the talented Jules is one of her special *boudoir* pets.”

Almost audibly did Dory’s heart pound. Yet she scorned the idea of jealousy. But it was useless to feign lack of interest. And Balster noted this interest and quickly proceeded: “Oh, yes, Jules sits up at the piano and plays — and all the ladies think he’s just the nicest thing. Margot Strange wouldn’t part with him for worlds!”

This brought Dory very suddenly to her point.

“Harry, listen to me — if I ever needed a friend I need one now. I’m going to confess to you — but promise me first you will not tell it to a soul — until I give you permission.”

“I promise, dear — anything you ask. With me you only have to wish a thing — that’s all. I obey.” Dory winced. Then she whispered softly, distinctly —

“Jules Blenner is my husband.”

Feeling too dazed to speak — sitting on the creaking chair, he jumped to his feet and pushed it suddenly away. “You don’t mean to say you married that little piano-player?”

“Don’t call him ‘little’ — he’s a great genius.”

Balster started to walk up and down the floor — shaking his head so that the fleshy cheeks wobbled and twitching his mouth in silent rage.

Finally he stopped. And looking down at the solemn troubled eyes, all fury fled as her beauty struck him anew and his voice broke in his throat as rage struggled with sensual desire.

“You poor child — this is an awful mess you’ve gotten yourself into. He marries you — then lets you root for yourself in a third-rate show — working you to death! While he — !”

Balster waved his thick hand and shrugging his shoulders — “he’s enjoying good dinners at Margot Strange’s and all the other society leaders’. You bet he knows better than to interject a good-looking wife at this stage of the game!”

“But Harry, if you’re going to talk like that, you’re no friend of mine.” The brown curls fell around the oval of her face as she raised herself and added with quiet severity: “We’d better end this unpleasant interview right here.”

But Harry Balster only saw that anger made her flush as pink as coral, and he hastened to continue the interview. “Well, that’s just it. I *am* a friend of yours, and I won’t see your life ruined by an egotistical little piano-player like him.” Then, with a heavy thud, he dropped to his knees. “Dory, that fellow has proven that he doesn’t love you — can’t you see he’s proven it — by leaving you this way. Listen, dear — I’ll send my car around tonight — you get out of this and come to me. I’ll arrange everything.”

“No — you —” but Dory could not stop his speech as he bent over her, a giant with a fat purple head, cruelly clasping the cold little hands.

“I’m a politician. I can arrange your divorce without any trouble. Only come to me for God’s sake, let me make you a queen as you deserve, instead of a bedraggled little beggar — married to that — ”

Shaking herself free, Dory gathered all her force — “I tell you it’s impossible. I can’t understand your caring for me — you don’t wish my friendship — now — nor my love — I know you, Harry Balster. You like people who are young — and — and when you think they’re pretty. I won’t give you even my friendship — I — ”

But he interrupted — “This is because of that sneak,” he cried. “That Jules Blenner getting you before me — *I* who have all the money you’d want — Jules Blenner — that little — parlor snake! ”

“Mr. Balster, I wish to end this conversation. I am a married woman — ” Dory raised herself and tilted her childish rounded chin in her pride — “I am Mrs. Jules Blenner.”

In a moment the man was on his feet — not a vestige of tenderness left — nothing but the animal fury of a hungry passion. “Well, go to him — suffer along through years of privation. I know his father — he’ll see that you have privation all right — he believes in it. It is formative for the young! And — er — some time — ” he drew himself up — “when Harry Balster is Ambassador — Governor — Senator — in some public office, — permit me to bow to the little musician’s wife! ”

“Ask you a favor — you? ” cried the girl.

On the verge of tears of fury, Dory spoke low so that her voice was scarcely audible, thereby holding his attention perfectly. "You a representative of this country? Never! I'd put you out of your cowardly low business if it's the last thing I do on earth! Your power will not be so great Harry Balster, when child labor is abolished from this country and you will be held as a horrible example—a Beast who fattened on the toil of little children!"

He rushed toward her—

"Fannie! — Fannie!" cried Dory.

"Yes — now, dear" — Fannie answered the summons immediately.

"Please show him —" But before Dory could finish he had brushed by the startled Fanny and was gone.

That night Harry Balster wrote to Felix's wife: —
"My dear Margot —

"I see your faithful swain — Jules — has forsaken you, got a chorus girl — Doreen O'Moore — whom he married a couple of months ago. It's being kept secret I believe — as women keep secrets. Everyone but the old man knows about it. She's a cute little thing, but given a good taste of poverty — it won't last long from the way their affairs are running. I'm enclosing a picture from the Gazette of the young lady in tights entitled 'The beautiful Dory O'Moore's legs.' For some reason she seems to have it in for you. I fancy that already Jules wishes himself free. At any rate it's another perfect dinner

guest gone bad on us. Thought this picture and the story would amuse our whole crowd (won't old Blenner fume!).

"All the homage of

"Yours sincerely,

"Harry."

And as it had transpired, Balster had with cruel cunning shot his arrow in the bull's-eye.

For one week later Dory while aboard the Empire State Express en route to New York, saw some startling headlines in the evening "Cryer," — Musician, son of millionaire John Blenner — Married to chorus girl — Doreen O'Moore — a girl whose pretty legs may be seen on this week's Police Gazette. She ——

CHAPTER XV

THE outlook seemed pretty bleak for Dory, but on arriving at the New York station, her husband had hurried on the platform and enfolded her in his arms. Looking up into his dark eyes all the troubles fled, all ugliness disappeared. To him, feeling her dear warm life made all the world seem insignificant beside her. They disappeared through the myriads of little human spots hurrying away to be swallowed up in the subway. They were being jostled by a busy throng, and then, after crossing streets, dodging many moving huge machines, horses, street-cars, they arrived at last in a big room at the top of an old-fashioned private house on Washington Square.

And there the light burned softly through a purple-shaded lamp and lovers were within the walls of their castle, and below — the ground — (in truth Washington Park) was bathed in limpid blues and golds and the outlines of buildings were lost in the spell of the twilight. As they looked out over the park their hearts expanded with pride — with ownership! Their blood throbbed exuberantly through their veins as they gazed upon it together. "Doesn't the park look lovely, dear?" whispered Dory. And no king owned more implicitly his beautiful estate or took more pride

in it than Jules as he smiled acquiescence and suggested a walk around the grounds after dinner.

Holding the small curved face in his hands he gazed at the rare beauty of it. The cleanness of her soul touched him. He kissed her hair, her eyes and mouth.

People seemed to draw aside to let them pass. A girl with long rounded limbs walking with graceful indolence on the arm of the slender poetic lover in whose eyes the fire divine burned. And they smiled at people, not knowing why, and were all unconscious that these outsiders looked back at them with hunger in their hearts as they paid homage to youth and romance. When they came back it was time to turn the soft lights on the big room that was home. The world became surrounded by four walls done in quiet brown; against one was a baby grand piano, against another, four chairs and an empty desk — a grate fire burned dimly in another. Through a low white door she saw that candles were lighted in the small attic bedroom. Through the low white door — his bedroom.

“Oh, we have talked about nothing but ourselves, dear, we must decide what is to be done about your father — he will never receive what the papers call ‘a chorus girl.’” Dory thought of the vulgar “Avec Plaizir” and shuddered. There was indeed the chorus girl type.

But again Jules’ strong arms were around her crushing her closer and in his eyes the strange fire

burned, and illuminated Dory's sad ones and made them both creatures of another world.

"We must decide," she whispered — vaguely — through her moist lips pressed to his.

"Yes — tomorrow," he answered and his embrace caused her hair to fall an auburn cloud over her ivory face and together they passed through the low white door.

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Her slender hands pouring his coffee in the morning would have made Jules a happy man indeed had it not been for a certain note in his hand.

The landlord wrote in dispassionate terms the fact that Mr. Blenner might pay up four months back rent or vacate the premises.

"What is it — you are not drinking your coffee, dear?" inquired Dory. And as she said it a premonition of trouble passed through her brain.

"No — that is, yes, it's all right, dear." He gulped the coffee, crumpling the note in his hand; as he looked from it to his lovely dependent mate, he felt like a weakling doomed to carry a great marble statue of Venus around the world on his back.

But like many husbands he said nothing of his fear to his wife, who, like many wives, had already guessed the contents of the letter and was seeking the best solution to the situation in her clever mind.

To be sure the hundred dollars a month Jules' father allowed him would come on the morrow. But

then he must pay the landlord for back rent and there would not be one cent for food. No matter how aesthetically beautiful a woman may be she requires at least one meal a day — whereas Jules could, as he often had, eat at free lunches and the houses of adoring friends.

Then what effect would the news of the marriage have upon his father? Suppose he discontinued the hundred dollars a month allowance? What then?

It was summer. He could get no pupils in town. There was not a possibility of a concert. To be sure a fortune was within his grasp if — if he might be properly introduced to the concert public. Narlow, the impresario, offered to launch him as America's greatest pianist. Narlow had perfect confidence in his genius and assured him of success — but five thousand dollars would have to be raised as financial backing. With this amount fifty contracts for the following year were guaranteed, all high paying ones.

To date, Jules' father had stubbornly refused the money, giving as his reason that he thought it absurd for a man to have to pay for the privilege of doing his work. All Jules' explanation that money was needed for press work — the manager's travelling expenses during the time of making the bookings — numerous other expenses in order to work on a broad scale — fell on deaf ears. And his operetta, which he had written to Jack Harrington's lyrics, had been returned by all the managers in New York.

“Jules, tell me what it is,” pleaded his wife. “Talk to me. You are worried about your father —”

“You see, Dory, it is impossible for me to play just now without financial backing — Narlow is a good manager — but he needs money — money for his travelling expenses — money — lots of it for advertising — the launching of an artist depends entirely upon that — articles in magazines — it’ll cost \$1000 for one musical paper alone. This is essential for the musical clubs throughout the country — they look in there to see what and who is an artist. Money for the daily press — for certain cities — it will cost \$5000 the first year. The second year I could make expenses. The third year I should be known and sought by managers — my compositions recognized, appreciated, and I should tread the upper paths — for which I am trained and capable. If father refuses this — no one else will give it. Outsiders would think it too uncertain an investment, and the alternative will be I’ll just teach and play in little orchestras and be middle class.” He waved his hands and walked across the floor while this idea presented itself to him. He pressed his temple as to shut out the revolting sight.

“I —” he cried, “it would kill me! I must have a big career! I can play all around anyone — Dory — I can bring them to my feet.” Then impulsively he took her head in his hands and kissed her. “Dory, it is for you I want all this, you sweet thing.” Quietly Dory took him in her arms.

"I," she whispered, "I have deprived you of your chance. That is what you mean — remember, to begin with, you are more fortunate than most people for you possess a precious jewel — it is the command of your musical powers. Try to be grateful to your father for that. Having it, you can always make your living in the conservatory."

"But," Jules began in protest. "As a damn teacher of a lot of bone-heads?" he inquired truculently. "I have a genius," he declared, "it is a precious jewel — as you say, and I should hope to tell you it requires an expensive setting!" — he laughed a little, relieving the tense situation, and kissed Dory's hand and so she smiled and acquiesced. In fact it seemed a logical statement. In her mind he was different from most people, he needed not only the jewel — but the setting as well. She said, "I know, Jules — the chance may have been small before of your father investing money in your career, but now it is nothing at all. Oh, Juley — if I can only help, dear one — I will."

"I don't see that you can help much unless you get a good job — and you see you have no experience or training to speak of, and — well — not that I care a damn for myself — but you know, dear, we haven't any money — when I pay my rent tomorrow we'll scarcely have a cent left." It had been said, and he flung himself around on the chair. "I'm sorry to have to tell you this."

It was with a heavy heart Dory smiled and laid her cheek against his forehead. "Dearest, we have

married — it was the best thing for us to do — and now we'll carry it through. I'll think out a way — go to see your father now and — later I'll get a small part in a good show — and — ”

But Jules kissed her hand and stopped her — “I don't like to discourage you, dear, but I'm afraid we're up against it at this time of year; there is nothing in town for you or me.” He drew back and ran his fingers through his shining black hair as his dark face became livid with fury. “God,” he muttered, “whoever published that news of our marriage has my curse, I tell you that. I hope they'll suffer for it — just as they are making me suffer now. I had just about gotten father prepared, and a little later everything would have been all right.”

Once more Dory took him in her arms but he remained rigid, grinding his teeth and scowling — “I mean it! ” I was just accustoming father to the idea and arranging things so that he'd meet you first and see that you are a lady. That! ” he pointed to the newspaper, “spoils the whole damn thing.” With an impatient gesture he pushed away the cup of fresh coffee Dory had just poured him.

Tears welled up in her throat. But immediately they were controlled and in a quiet voice she reasoned with him, advised him — subjugated him.

For the first time he had been almost cross with her. And though she realized there was cause, light was thrown on Jules' nature; when fortune turned from him he complained to the person he loved best — the

person for whom he wanted everything, and a tender smile hovered on Dory's lips as she noted this trait in his character. "You poor boy," she whispered.

When Dory was alone, looking out over the little park, she began to think.

Life is an art. Happiness can only be produced by tolerance — understanding. Her Jules as a musician was a great musician — as a man, he was a wilful child. She would try to understand. She would pray, too, for tolerance.

The situation seemed hopeless for Dory — Jules would never do a man's work. Darkness surrounded her. Slowly the girl dropped to her knees and for a long time remained vaguely fingering her little imitation pearl necklace. Over and over she repeated a fervent prayer — "God send me light." Finally the clouds cleared away, and the world seemed a far-off temple of devotion to a merciful God who listened to her prayers.

In God Dory had perfect faith, and this faith and nearness to Him always came after an hour so spent in the silence with her rosary and thought of Him ever before her.

"Dear Lord," she prayed, "You have given my husband talent for music — You have touched his brain with the magic of genius, surely You could not mean to have it crushed." Again the rosary over and over and her slender body swaying to the rhythm of it. "Dear God," she prayed, "You are giving me a little child" — and at this thought the tears welled

up in her limpid eyes and flowed silently down her soft rounded face — “Oh, God, You do not mean that it has come only to complicate our lives — only come for its own unhappiness.” Then the light seemed really to have dawned — her baby — his pink dimpled face seemed almost beneath her enfolding hand. And over her spread almost affection for Jules’ father. Of course he was cynical and mean, but anyone who suffered from dyspepsia, as Jules said his father did, would feel mean.

The girl was happy — why had she not told Jules — ah, even if he came home from his father’s unsuccessful, disconsolate, she would not be sad — because on the morrow she herself would go to his father with the wonderful news of the happiness he was to have.

As if some rain from heaven had poured a merciful shower upon a dying rose the young mother relaxed and sobbed; all thoughts fled; she lay down upon the lounge near the piano, and her eyelids became heavy. “Light, dear God, You have sent me light,” she breathed. The eyelids became heavier still and she felt a strange palpitating warmth beneath her heart.

Outlines of the room disappeared, nothing existed, only the memory of a long, wonderful night — the spirit of love enfolded her — Jules — he would bury his face in her hair and she would whisper in his ears the news — a baby! The sweet rounded head — the soft cuddling body — close — close to her life — his father’s eyes — yes, yes, large black eyes with the

ardor of the South in them — always, always, she would love them so — and the tiny mouth — ah, she must take a glass of nice warm milk — eat nourishing things. Baby — the warmth made her somnolent, and the tear on Dory's soft cheek was only a tear of maternal brooding, and in another moment the girl-mother fell sound asleep.

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Two hours passed before Dory awakened and, not expecting Jules home for luncheon, she decided to go and see poor old Zoe. "Zodie shall hear my secret," said Dory to herself as she put some finishing touchings on cleaning up the apartment. She patted the white bed and peered into closets and was thrilled to see them look so well. Her belongings she would put in a box which she would cover in cretonne and put under the bed. Then Jules would have the one bureau all to himself. For a moment she paused and wondered if he would permit her to make this sacrifice. (I must tell you, he certainly did and quite without a thought in the matter!)

It was twelve o'clock — luncheon time. Surely it would not be a considerate thing for her to impose on the Sands for a meal. She had no news of Zoe since those two letters on luxurious stationery; of course, on second thought, that meant nothing. It would be just like Zoe to spend her last dollar on such foolishness. She would buy a bottle of milk for eight cents, plenty of milk for the baby, and some buns for three and so have her lunch in Zodie's room. They had

changed their boarding-house, for she saw their address on Jules' telephone card. It was number "542 Park Avenue." She would have to ask the janitor how to get there.

On went the black hat and the grey princess dress — a little tight now, that princess dress — but that was a mere trifle. In Dory's heart there was nothing but content and hope. Then too, poor Zoe probably needed comforting — someone with whom to talk over her troubles!

The janitor said she could buy her milk at the corner and go up Fifth Avenue to 54th Street on a 'bus and then walk over to Park Avenue.

And all of this was done. For surely she had made a mistake in the number for the palatial apartment house could not be Zoe's residence! Excusing herself to the man in livery at the door of this number, who promptly scowled upon her load of bread and milk bottle — "Excuse me," said Dory. "I think I have the wrong address. It's Miss Zoe Sand I want to see."

"Well, she is on the sixth floor, miss, but all packages are delivered at the other door — right round the side entrance, please."

And Dory found herself being escorted by him of the brass buttons to the servants' entrance and indeed had arrived at the sign before she protested.

"But no — no — I am a friend of Miss Sand's — I — I —"

"A what?"

"A friend — I —" and Dory was headed, hugging her package, for the front door — "I —"

"What name, please?" asked he of the solemn importance. "I'll send your name up to Miss Sand."

"Miss — that is, ahem — Mrs. — er — Miss Doreen O'Moore."

Once more the flunkey looked her over and then announced the name to the switchboard operator.

The only feeling Dory had was in the arms squeezing her packages.

"Come right up, please."

And, stepping in a mirrored elevator, another flunkey beckoned her.

A maid dressed in grey with white cap and apron answered the door.

"Miss Sand?" faltered Dory.

"Yes, ma'am, you're to come in." This very chic person reached for Dory's packages and in giving her the bread, poor Dory spilt the milk all over the priceless carpet. Confusion overwhelmed her, but the Irish maid took one look at her and the debris and burst out laughing, and Dory promptly embraced her and walked right on into the salon. In an instant this had happened. It was all too fantastic.

While listening to her heart pound audibly, Dory stood in the middle of the sumptuous room, bravely endeavoring to grasp the situation.

So, this was Zoe's apartment? She looked around. A large room done in amethystine tones. On the walls paneled in grey wood two pictures were isolated,

— a brilliant fantasy by Gaston Le Touch and one of Romney's Lady Hamilton. Some strange transparent moonlight blue silk hung at the long French windows, and it cast a mysterious light upon the French furniture which was upholstered in amethyst brocades, and the thick plain violet rug near by, which nearly covered the grey floor. Here and there a bijou of rare value, just giving the proper accent, and as Dory gazed at one of these — a red Chinese porcelain, she saw a laughing-eyed Dryad in the doorway — a vision whose skin gleamed through floating chiffons. Dory felt as if she must examine that too, but in another instant with a high-pitched cry the "vision" rushed towards her and the two girls were clasped in each other's embrace.

Zoe stood off that Dory might gaze in admiration. If it might be called a tea-gown it was a violet one. But a drapery of violet chiffon would be a more apt description of this filmy cloud. And on her feet, purple slippers with gleaming buckles and flesh-colored stockings that could be seen through the chiffon at least to her knees. Rubies in delicate Cartier settings were on her slender throat, and to Dory it seemed as if her friend had been remoulded by God — so wonderfully were her charms emphasized by her clothes and surroundings.

"Well, booby, don't stand there like a dunce — tell me what you think of it!" demanded Zoe.

"Why, it's lovely!" said Dory. One had to say something. It seemed to her there never was such a

pitiful looking dunce as she must be — Zoe was fairly radiant. Dory's feet seemed to grow to a gigantic size, a way they had when she became conscious of her poor clothes, and how miserably conscious we do become of them when in the presence of well-dressed friends or enemies — particularly well-dressed enemies.

“For the love o' Mike, who's your fairy godmother?” inquired Dory.

“Oh, ha,” laughed Zoe, as she went right up the scale in the spectacular old laugh the nuns so objected to in the convent — “Ha! there ain't no such animal as a fairy godmother! For a girl, Dory, the story goes like this —” and Zoe touched her jeweled fingers together and began in a low monotonous voice: “There once was a fairy godfather who gave the beautiful present girl (indicating herself) her chance — and three wishes.”

“Three wishes if she took the chance,” supplied Dory.

Then, jewels, violet drapery and all — Dory enfolded Zoe in her protecting young arms.

“Now, don't preach,” laughed Zoe.

But before Dory could answer, the curtains parted and now Dory really did rub her eyes — for there in the doorway a tall dark man appeared in his lounging robe. It was Felix Strange.

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Strange quickly excused himself and went to his room to dress.

While Dory was being led to Zoe's bedroom a million muddled thoughts seemed to fly through her head as the whole situation began to dawn upon her.

"Zoe, I can't believe it," she whispered. "Zoe —"

"Well, what do you think of me?" demanded Zoe through her half-closed eyes. "Am I not a smart girl to make a catch like dear old Felix?"

"But, dearest, when did all this happen — tell me."

"Ye gods, you look like a young funeral! Believe me the time you should have looked like that was when I left you and came back to town. Mommie was 'spiffed' all the time and had no money — Jack Harrington certainly had no money — nothing but nasty misery. Ugh! Then Felix just out of the sanitarium needing sympathy which he didn't get from that cat of a wife of his — gee!" Zoe's eyes became two disks of black rage. "She was always so respectable — she couldn't know anybody — spends her life with a lot of 'protégés' — really parlor snakes. So — anyway to continue, dearie, Felix and I had some cute little luncheons together, you see — I made him crazy about me — and it was partly my suggestion that after he sent poor old Mommie to an expensive sanatorium that he and I should take a little flat together and — people think he's a relative of Mommie's — we've a brand new set of friends —"

"But, Jack," whispered Dory, for she knew that must be secret — "what became of poor old Jack Harrington?"

"Sh-sh!" whispered Zoe. "You don't suppose I've

given up Jack? ” Zoe’s eyes turned up more than ever at the corners and she gritted the sharp white teeth beneath the large mouth, then she whispered, “Now I have everything I desire in the world — money — beautiful things — love, and I shall always love Jack. “Dory,” she whispered, “you are the only one in the world that knows that, — you and Mommie.”

“But how can you see him now, dear? ”

“How? Stupid! He comes here — poor old Felix never suspects me — you shall meet him at dinner — at card parties. In fact I’ve taken up bridge as an excuse to have to call Jack in to make a fourth.”

Dory shivered — “Ugh — Zodie — my girl — I’m afraid for you, dear — I’m — ” The purple lights filled her eyes and made the brown of them almost blue as her heart went sad for Zoe.

“Don’t shiver, stupid child — really all the respectable married women I have ever known had a lover — that’s being done in our polite society, Dory. Felix is like a husband though we are not married; he’s a dear old thing who pays the bills. We get on splendidly — he’s mad about me and protects my reputation by pretending to people he’s Mommie’s relative, and we’re very happy together — what more can a woman want — I ask you? ”

Dory looked at her — “You made Felix crazy about you wilfully, Zodie? For money — knowing your heart belongs to Jack? ”

Clinching those vicious even white teeth, dilating

the thin nostrils, Zoe looked at Dory once more in that curious way she had — through the half-closed, dimly-burning eyes. “Yes,” she said, stretching her body like a healthy young animal, “I made him.” And Dory understood.

For had she not seen Zoe move men at will, seen her many times speak to men with her eyes — black disks beneath a tangle of dark hair — eyes that said evil things. In a room she would walk past a man and though she did not touch him he felt her strange animal allure. And unhappy indeed was the man she willed to her side, who wished not to yield — for no matter how chaste his moral nature, she wound herself in his dreams day and night like an exotic perfume from the east — perfume intangible — sensual — maddening.

“Come on in and see my bedroom, Dory — I want to know what you think of it. I did the decorating myself.”

And indeed the room expressed the girl — for there was a touch of the mediaeval in Zoe. The bedroom in this house was decorated of all things with holy crucifixes! An exquisite one of old ivory hung on a piece of antique Venetian brocade over the bed. A prie-Dieu was placed near the foot of her couch, a prayer chair of the Renaissance period with a Madonna suspended above it, and before this burned a small red light. The color motive of the room was deep dark red and that warm old gold used on cathedral altars.

Now Zoe leaned against the prayer chair, the religious light sparkled on the rubies at her throat, as she talked and gesticulated! Her filmy drapery revealed her slender arm to the shoulder.

"The bed is a real relic of the Renaissance," she explained and with trembling fingers Dory examined the exquisite workmanship of the dark wood. "Felix said they had real art in those times, because artists loved what they did — to-day they look too much for money."

Murmuring something about that being interesting, Dory examined a fine old rosary which hung on the bed. She picked it up and laid her cheek reverently against its cross.

"Isn't that a peach?" demanded Zoe.

Dory shrugged almost imperceptibly, but it was not lost on the observant Zoe. She laughed up and down the scale and started to talk very fast, — really in order to hide the confusion she felt coming over her in the presence of her friend.

"Ha! — you should see me go to church now, Dory. I always take great care to go after mass has started and it's the most wonderful sensation to feel all eyes upon you as you prance down the aisle. I put gold in the plate, or rustle a bill in it. I always leave just before it ends — and my chauffeur (you should see my little car) is instructed to drive up just when the people are coming out, and I step in and show just a hint of my nice stockings — like this."

"You certainly seem very happy," said Dory.

She smoothed the brocaded coverlet of the bed one moment, enjoying its color. What taste was displayed! Dory went from one piece to another, examining everything with little cries like a delighted child. The moodiness of expected motherhood was upon her and her vague thoughts came back to her friend as she heard Zoe striking a match and saying in her high-pitched voice —

“Ah, Dory, — to be quite frank with you — I don’t honestly care about anyone in the world — while I have all the cigarettes I want. Of course I like Jack more than anyone — and you know I love you, darling, — but a nice place to stay — and people adoring me — I don’t care about anything else. And any good-looking girl can have it — and, Dory, this is meant for you — she’s a fool if she don’t take it, an absolute fool! ”

It was then that Felix reappeared quite perfectly groomed in a grey suit, a dark red carnation as a boutonniere. He was thinner than he had been before his sickness, and the pallor made his blue eyes darker and larger. His black hair was brushed straight back from his fine forehead showing a few streaks of white at the temples and Dory was struck with his handsomeness. He went over and sat beside her with the same confidence he had shown when they met at the Sands — hardly a year ago. He might have been Zoe’s husband for all one could glean from his attitude towards her. Not a word about the present situation, nothing but sincere regard and interest in Dory’s circumstances.

She noticed that the line was cut deeper between his heavily lashed eyes and he had shorn his moustache and she saw that his mouth was very large and firm and curiously curved, a perfect frame for his strong white teeth. He smiled adorably, Dory thought, and could not understand Zoe not being much in love with him.

He told Dory he had read of her marriage but had not seen Jules to congratulate him. He said she was too good for Jules, and that he intended telling Jules' father so when he dined with him that night.

"But, Felix, didn't that look dreadful in the paper, 'A little chorus girl'? That's what I was, of course, but somehow I think Jules' father will associate it with the 'Avec Plaizir'—'Pearl April' types—don't you know?"

Drawing his brows together, Felix made an impatient gesture—"Ah—of course old Blenner is a sour old man—never permitted himself to enjoy anything but misery—he has always luxuriated in making a sort of 'trained black sheep' out of Jules, but—don't worry about it, Dory—we'll see what can be done."

"Whoever gave that news to the paper, anyway?" asked Zoe. "It was certainly a nut, whoever it was!"

"I can't imagine," said Dory. "Of course poor Jules is desolate—he acted as if it were all hopeless this morning—I—" then Dory's eyes reflected the beautiful mystery of her secret, "but *I* have not

given up hope — I may be able to — help him — I — ”

Just then luncheon was announced, much to Dory's satisfaction, and they all passed into the charming blue and yellow dining room.

Dory was just about to inquire into the health of Mrs. Strange — but refrained. Then, to ask about Jack Harrington — but refrained. And the next person whose name her lips started to form was Harry Balster — and refrained.

Zoe's usual loquaciousness at meals seemed to have forsaken her— no one said anything until Felix — obviously to relieve the silence, asked “who was Avec Plaizir and Pearl What's-her-name,” and then went on encouraging her to talk about the people in the opera company.

Finally coffee was served after which Felix begged to be excused saying he was due at the office, kissing Zoe goodbye and shaking hands with Dory. As he pressed her hand a moment, he whispered, “Try not to think too hard of us, Dory — we want your friendship very much.”

The girls were alone and they retired once more to Zoe's bedroom. “We'll talk while I primp up, then you come with me in the car to the — where I'm going to meet Jack accidentally on purpose! ”

Zoe glanced disapprovingly at Dory's grey princess dress and frowsy black hat.

After disappearing in her closet she came out with a trim green hat and pretty green cloak. “Here,

dear — you must take this — I'll give you a dress, too, — take this — throw those things you have on in the swill pail."

Dory remonstrated, but the charm of the green hat was too much. When she tried it on, she hugged Zoe and accepted all.

"I thought you liked antiques," laughed Dory as she drew off the old grey dress which was literally unraveling at the crooked seams.

"You certainly made a mess of it by marrying poor Jules," said Zoe, as if she were answering things in her own mind. "You might have married Balster and had lovely things so Jules would keep on loving you! That is the real way to happiness for a woman."

Dory felt she could keep her secret no longer from Zoe. That secret would be enough to change Zoe's mind!

"Listen to me, Zodie, — the most real — *the* happiness of all that can come to a woman has come to me. It is something from the beyond that comes because a woman loves a man. It comes within her very body and touches her very heart — this real happiness — then, too, it is holy — it is the responsibility of the love of a man and a woman — Zodie — "

"What? " Zoe asked. "What — you don't mean, Dory — "

"You are the *first* one I have told it to — for a little while you must keep this secret. Oh — sh — I hope it will be a boy, Zodie, — a wonderful boy like Jules."

“ You are going to have a child, Dory? Well, you are the silliest girl I know. I didn’t say anything much when you married Jules — you were so determined — you did him harm — harm I say, to him, as well as yourself by doing it. *Now* you want to put this expense on him — the expense of having a child is very great — and then *ruin* your figure — and the beautiful Dory O’Moore will turn into an old Dumb-bell — *that’s* what it will be! Happiness — piffle! ”

“ But, Zodie, — you don’t understand.”

“ You say you love Jules — well, you have taken the surest way of losing him — now I *know* what I’m talking about. Of course you haven’t told Jules — poor boy, without a cent and a rotten old miser for a father.”

“ Zoe — I’m going to him — to his father, and tell him this — you don’t know him, neither do I, for that matter, but I *feel* he will be glad of his first — his only grandchild — it will make him human — he will understand again. But, Zoe — ”

“ *He!* Well, that is the *prize* silly thing — he will just be human enough to inform you of the fact that you’ve made your bed with a poor man — now you can lie on it — Harry Balster was perfectly right — you had no business — a beautiful girl like you — with your talent, marrying a poor artist. Ye gods — one doesn’t marry artists! They create beautiful things — they are wonderful lovers, but as husbands they are jokes! ”

Zoe’s vitality was equalled only by her assurance

and in Dory's present weak condition the words penetrated and she began to wonder. But again that sweet weariness within the depths of her — she snuggled in the green coat, her eyes wide with wonder — for was it something stirred? A faint fluttering within like a bird stirring its wings, a sensation profound, exquisite! Zoe's voice clanged like the beating of iron rails on a summer morning and the tender warmth was again quite still.

"Zoe!" she whispered. "I love my Baby — as if he were already born. I'd go through anything for it. Ah, Zoe," she sighed and paused a moment for again she felt that exquisite fluttering within her — "Zoe — I am willing to die for this little child — I am willing to die for the happiness I have in feeling him there." She paused a moment, then straightened the fine square shoulders and her eyes mirrored the resolution. "But I shall live to tend it and I shall — Oh, Zoe — I must make Jules' father help us." Again she straightened and as her sensitive mouth framed the words, it seemed to Zoe that Dory must make her will materialize, so earnest was her wish. "He must stand by us in this crucial time of all our lives — he must!" Suddenly Dory was quite decided. "I have mated with the man who attracted me — physically — mentally — and I take the responsibility of this love in bearing his child. I would not be bought by that ugly Harry Balster simply because he has money. You would be more happy, Zoe, if

you went to Jack, because he is your true mate, and work for your living! ”

Zoe fixed the comb in her hyacinth black hair, made an impatient gesture and sought the heavens with her eyes. “ My dear Dory — we left school at eighteen knowing not one damn thing — except a lot of airy persiflage — we had no money. You have the patience to start in and study and work endlessly against all odds — I have not. There you are! At school we used to tell them straight when we were only about ten or twelve that you wanted to be a singer — I wanted to be an actress. We *showed* talent but they only humored us, and ignored our ambitions. Result, we came out into the great Big Beautiful World — with nothing to offer.”

“ You are right,” said Dory — “ no one knows it better than I.”

Zoe continued, “ As it is, Dory — the powers in this world are rich men! They are all-powerful, can have anything they want — any girl they want. I had sense enough to grasp *my* luck in Felix — it doesn’t keep me from seeing Jack. You were a folly and passed up Harry Balster! ”

In Dory’s eyes came the mystical look of the prophet, when she answered in her low voice, “ Ah, Zoe, what you say is terrible and there is truth in it, but those low standards are going to be changed, changed by better and wiser education; men like Harry Balster are not always going to be the auto-crats — vocational training will better those conditions.

The more I live and read the more I am convinced of this. Now that women are franchised they will little by little clean out the prurient and place the normal big intellects in power regardless of sex or material possessions! ”

Zoe shrugged her thin little shoulders and arranged some flowers in a Venetian vase in front of the ivory Virgin's altar. “You'd make a fascinating orator dear. If you talk like that to Felix, he'd have you making a speech before his Friday night club; it's quite the thing for people to go there and hear famous people of the day speak. They hire orators there — it's a pretty good job, too. A good-looking girl like you talking would help the cause along. They have too much wise old stuff down there for me. I think Felix started it for advertising of his magazine. And Strange's has surely profited by the speaking which it gets for nothing, and incidentally the club has become immensely popular.”

Excitement had brought tears to Dory's eyes. Zoe's flagrantly illicit life depressed her and, sinking in a chair, she buried her head in her arms while the long rounded hand vaguely felt the place beneath her heart.

Zoe bowed down and kissed her hair. “I don't understand you, Dory — I'm afraid you're a silly idealist — and that doesn't pay — it gets you nothing. Even the child is not all yours after about ten years — it has other interests.”

“But Zoe, even if what you say is true, just think

life's span is supposed to be seventy years, and for ten of those years to have a little being dependent on you — loving you — more than all, there is the love you always have for it! ”

“ This is all pretty talk, and you're happy at the idea of having a baby — but you're too young. . . . be anything you like, but don't be a mother. That is a bore! I tell you, you'll spoil your figure — lose your husband, and all to have a petulant kid on your hands.” Zoe took up her rouge stick and started to make up her mouth, then catching sight of Dory's wistful face in the mirror she went over impulsively and threw her arms around her. “ I love you, Dory,” she said — “ I don't want to see you spoil *all* your chances, you are too sentimental to have good sense.”

But Dory recoiled. “ Zoe,” she whispered as she drew back, “ you must never give any woman advice like that — it is the lowest crime a woman can commit.”

“ Oh, silly, it's no crime, sometimes, women are not in a position to have a child;” then suddenly with a frightened gesture Zoe lost herself in Dory's arms. “ It's no crime, I tell you. Dory, don't say those things to me. You make me nervous, when you say things like that.” Loosening herself from Zoe's embrace, Dory went over and looked vaguely out of the window. She had nothing but pity in her heart for Zoe — pity now, and a deep friendship always, which nothing could destroy. Friendship — is an emotion which makes us seek the reason of the weakness of the flesh

and understand, tolerate, forgive and love in spite of it.

And so Dory regretted silently that poor Zoe would suggest so base a thing — kissed her and decided suddenly to go.

“ My Zoe,” she whispered to her friend at the door, “ my poor Zoe, you have never been awakened! ”

But the dark girl threw back her head and whispered: “ I’d rather stay asleep — asleep on my bed of roses! ”

CHAPTER XVI

THAT night Jules returned to his wife and without a word threw his arms around her and burst into tears. "We are derelicts, Dory," he moaned. "I have simply brought suffering upon you and myself. Father has seized this opportunity for cutting off my income entirely! "

He pressed his face against hers and swayed back and forth so frantically that when he drew away to pace the floor her heavy auburn hair fell about her shoulders. Dory stood very quiet, for she felt faint and nauseated. Never had she seen Jules so uncontrolled before. Suddenly he seemed seized with fury and in his wrath his father's name became anathema. "Damn him," he cried over and over again, "his money will do him no good. Death will take it away soon. I hope to God it does. I — "

Once more, in a frenzy of passionate weeping, he threw himself on the chair and buried his head in his hands.

Dory went over to him and placed his arms around her as she knelt and pressed her tender cheek against his wet, burning one and dried his tears with her heavy, soft hair. "My poor one," she murmured, "my poor, hurt darling." Gently she smoothed his contracted hands and gradually comforted him. She

took off his coat and put on his dressing-robe and while he sat in this silken garment (some fair admirer's offering) she tremblingly prepared and served his omelet and tea and then insisted upon his going to bed.

"But first I must practice an hour or so. My hands — my hands are stiff." But Dory insisted he must go and rest. And long after he had sunk in deep, dreamless slumber, Dory lay staring awake planning a visit to his father on the following day.

CHAPTER XVII

THE iron gate was swung open by a stooping, miserable-looking butler and as Dory stepped into the tapestry-hung hall, a tall old man seemed to jerk out of the curtains at the extreme end at the top of the steps. For a moment, he stood there, glowering like a sullen criminal, while Dory whispered to the butler: "Will you say, please, Mrs. Jules Blenner," — and at that the tall old man seemed to leap back behind the huge curtain from whence he had come.

Then the butler wobbled up there, disappeared and after a moment came unsteadily towards Dory. He seemed to stoop lower than ever as he began: "Very sorry, Madam, but Mr. Bl-Blenner is not at home."

At that, the old man came out once more and called in a nasal voice: "Oh well, come up — come up." And passing by the very embarrassed butler, Dory mounted the stairs. In another moment, she stood in a high-ceilinged, palatial room, with her husband's father, who had taken himself to the extreme end of it and stood leaning against a table.

Ignoring Dory, he looked towards a rather handsome, slender young woman sitting on a couch, who arose with a slight swish of her silken gown and went over to the girl and holding out a hand very high in

the air, "I am Mrs. Felix Strange," she said, and touched finger-tips with Dory, who murmured some pretty recognition of her friend's wife.

And Dory looked once more with mute pleading at Mr. Blenner, who did not stir but looked with mute animus at her.

His long, oblong face, with its thin, flabby cheeks, narrow grey-green eyes and drooping, colorless mouth, bore no resemblance at first glance to Jules. But there was something about the large, aquiline nose and about the square line of his thick grey hair as it grew off the lined, low brow, which did suggest his son.

Jerking his narrow shoulders back and placing his hands in his pockets, he looked once more at Mrs. Strange, then drew the heavy black brows down in a sullen frown, and coughed nervously as he felt Dory turn to him.

Her head was like a pink rose set on her slender, bended neck, and when she turned, it seemed exactly as if the wind swayed it round always with that graceful, indolent movement.

"Mr. Blenner," Dory's voice shook a little.

"Well," he fairly shouted, "what do you want? I know what you want. Jules came and had the nerve to ask me yesterday after — marrying a girl out of the — the theatre. Well, if you think I have raised my boy to be a parasite, young woman, you are much mistaken. He is perfectly educated — that is, equipped. I did all that." Mr. Blenner dove his hands deep in his pockets and jerked his shoulders back "I did all

that," he repeated. "My duty has been done most thoroughly. Now he can stand on his own legs."

Dory winced. "Mr. Blenner, Jules appreciates the wonderful education you have given him — we both do — and " — but the father interrupted her.

"And," continued the old man, a look of cunning in his narrow grey eyes, "if he can't make his living by music — let him try something else." Jerking himself out of the chair, he went over and stood with his back to Dory. He wished not to look at the pretty, sorrowful face of this "little upstart," who came but to graft on him. He wished to enjoy his moment of revenge. How many times had that dark boy of his stood up, looking out of his mother's wilful black eyes, reiterating. "Music is my life. I will stick to it in spite of everything."

He turned on the girl, shaking with self-righteousness. "Let him stick to his music now that he has a wife to support and see how he likes what his father always advised him against. See if he would not prefer being an honest working-man as his father is, and earning plenty of money."

Sociologically, feeble-mindedness is a condition of mental relative incompetence, dating from birth or infancy, which makes it impossible for the individual to get along in the world on equal terms with his normal fellow-men.

Feeble-minded and piteously so are all those morbidly fear-haunted human beings who are only ambitious of money, and those who crave it for its own sake are insane.

The father wished an excuse to cut off Jules' income and when Margot abetted him he seized upon this marriage like a monster. He wished a grievance against his only son and when Margot suggested he was to be pitied, he reached out avidly for the sympathy of the world.

Rising from the sofa, Margot Strange went over and laid her arm upon his with a soft, sheltering movement. She stretched her tall form and looked with condescending curiosity upon the green-cloaked little figure of Dory.

"My dear Cousin Ned, please don't excite yourself. You'll be very ill with all this — perhaps this young woman had better content herself with being the wife of a very poor young man, and wash and cook and sew for him as decent women do who are married to poor men."

"A decent woman?" queried Dory. Her voice was very low and in the darkness of the room her pale face seemed a phantasm and the dark, slim silhouette of her figure was almost lost in the shadows of the tapestried corner. "I am sure," came the musical voice, "Mrs. Strange, you can tell me what is a decent woman."

Rage overcame Mr. Blenner. This remark seemed full of implied meaning to him. He crossed the room and stood directly in front of Dory. "You are in the presence of one of America's recognized gentlewomen," he said, "my kinswoman. That is the sort of family you have worked yourself into."

“ Oh! ” Dory’s voice and manner affected them both. Margot Strange itched to strike her across the stupid little face as she ground her teeth behind her loose lips, with their stereotyped smile, glancing sweetly and sympathetically at the same time at her cousin Ned, who chivalrously came to her protection against the transgressor.

“ I’ll answer your question,” said he. “ A decent woman does *not* hold herself up to the public, does *not* make a *show* of herself for money like that.” And before Dory’s eyes was flashed the picture of herself in tights. “ It was just sent to Mrs. Strange by our mutual friend Mr. Balster, and it’s very plainly *you!* ”

Now the tears stood hot in her eyes and there was a hard, hard lump in her throat. She felt alone — alone in a burning desert of poisonous sand. This woman who had fattened on the loneliness of Felix Strange, luring him with courtship and love-making — getting his name, his money, everything, and giving him nothing. Old Blenner had driven his wife — Jules’ mother — to the insane asylum with his constant nagging against her dreamy, artistic ways. And when, after an illness he had caused, she was condemned to a sanatorium, he considered himself abused by Fate for being married to a woman with a weak brain. That same self-righteousness now showed in regard to their son and to the girl whom he was repudiating, his cruel gaze scrutinizing her wistful face.

The dry sob in Dory’s throat nearly overwhelmed

her. She burst out crying — she felt for her handkerchief and her fingers clasped her heart.

At that moment, over his shoulder, Dory saw a picture — a long panel — the portrait of a dark woman in a crimson gown, with Jules' face. A light burned over it — a reflector — the eyes smiled into hers. "Don't give up," they seemed to say. "I gave up, dear — my last baby died because of his cruelty and deprivation — then my mind died — of fatigue, grief. But you bear up — for Jules' sake — you are young now — have courage — it is for your babe."

"Mr. Blenner," Dory heard her own voice far away, "if you please, Mr. Blenner — I should like to tell you something alone — if Mrs. Felix Strange would not mind — then I shall go away. . . ."

"Anything you care to say to me may be said in my cousin's presence. If it had not been for her, I should not have seen you at all. Just to please her I did — so I'd hear what you have to say."

"What you say about washing — working, sewing, is quite true. I wish I might do just that for my husband. But I came to ask you for your help because your son was born a muscian; everything about him is the organism of a musician — in that profession you trained him — if you force him into a shop — he will go for my sake — but he will meet the same fate as his mother. Mr. Blenner, something has happened. I know when you hear what is going to happen — I cannot work just now — "

"Well? "

Her eyes sought the soft sad ones of the portrait and her voice was sonorous and steady.

“We are expecting — a little baby!”

“Good God, this is awful,” exclaimed the man.

“Awful?” asked Dory. Then turning to Mrs. Strange, she asked again: “You who are a woman, you do not think it is awful — to have a baby?”

“In your position, yes — I think it is — an imposition.”

Then the tears did come and choked her throat but dried hard in her eyes and the woman in the portrait seemed to stretch out her arms.

And the rasping voice of the old man continued:

“That I suppose you thought would get me — I suppose you thought that would be your winning card. Well, you’re mistaken. Jules has taken a wife without my knowledge, now he has the responsibility of you and a child to support. It will make a man of him.”

Moving towards the door, the girl bowed and passed out — down the stairs, many luxuriously carpeted steps — down the hall — the velvet-hung hall — to a heavy carved iron door which a liveried servant opened, and the little bruised figure in the green cloak and bonnet stepped out into the street.

CHAPTER XVIII

PLUNGING Jules into poverty now — in New York, where he had been bred, it would make him merely cheap. He would solve his life's problems on a lower scale — that was all. Out of grim necessity, he would forsake the ideals he had for being presented in a distinguished way to the public and pouring the message of his exotic soul out to them — his beautiful ambition to be the magic reed through which the muscians of other centuries lived again and again would sing their sonorous songs. All this would be forsaken and he would accommodate his genius to dull surroundings and the obsequiousness of a music teacher in some conservatory for a pittance. And while all this would be stimulating to certain spirits with the strength of fighters in their veins, for Jules it would be stultifying.

Still smarting from the cruelty of that unnatural father, Dory descended from the 'bus when she reached Washington Square and went to sit on a bench in the little park. The tall lithe form of Mrs. Felix Strange seemed to stand before her and mock her. And Harry Balster had dared to suggest that Jules had been in love with her!

She tightened her hands but for some reason could not control the chill that shook her as she thought of

the fact that even now Jules was giving Mrs. Strange lessons twice a week on the piano in her beautiful private studio. She was his only pupil. She paid ten dollars a lesson — now it was their only source of income. But — and once more that icy feeling ran down her spine to the soles of her feet and through her heart till the blood left her face. Both those afternoons — Tuesday and Friday — were the ones on which Jules had returned late to dinner — with some vague excuse about stopping at his club. Dory thought of Margot Strange. Yes, surely she was beautiful. And jealousy possessed the girl's brain and body.

CHAPTER XIX

UPON Dory's return, when all seemed darkest for her, a note from Jack Harrington stirred her heart, brought her out of herself. The note read:

"My dear Dory: —

"We are in distress — Zoe and I. Please come to us. Zoe is ill in the Bloan Hospital. Don't say anything of this to Felix, should you see him, but come at once.

"Jack Harrington."

Indescribable currents of evil seemed to permeate the nervously-written note, and the situation as it really was seemed to dawn on Dory before poor Zoe herself related it. When she arrived at the Bloan Hospital, a nurse took Dory's name and was about to go through the customary red tape, when Jack appeared, startingly jerky and trembling, and drew her into one of the reception rooms.

His hands were cold and a green pallor overspread his face. The pupils of his vivid grey eyes were narrowed to a needle-point and his full large mouth was twitching.

"Dory," he whispered, "we must try to keep the truth of this from Felix."

"What, Jack? I don't even know what you are talking about — except that Zoe is in trouble."

“ Trouble — God, I have told Zoe I didn’t want to play this double game. If she must live in luxury — why, she’d have to go to Felix. I couldn’t kick, but I tried to give her up. She wanted all that but she insisted upon seeing me — and I was mad — mad about her. At the very time that Zoe was talking to you the other day she knew that she was expecting a child — herself — our child. Do you understand, Dory? ”

Looking in her wistful, sympathetic face, he read his answer and guessed her thought that Zoe should have gone to him and they together take the responsibility of their love.

“ Dory,” he continued, as he ran his thin, nervous fingers through his thick sandy hair, “ Dory, the doctor doesn’t hold out any hope — but we must save her! She will need the most careful nursing, and no agitation of any kind. Her mother came home last night, apparently perfectly well, but she upsets Zodie terribly. She was the cause of all this — suggested it. Now, what’s going to happen? And my girl must, must be saved. I’d kill myself if anything happened to Zodie.”

At that moment, the door opened softly and gliding across the polished floor in the smartest of gowns came Mrs. Sand.

She kissed Dory and taking a chair, sat beside Jack.

“ Listen,” she whispered, “ it is all arranged. I have seen Felix.” She hesitated a moment as she addressed them both. “ You understand, Jack,” she said

meaningly — “Felix knows nothing of your — affection for Zoe.”

Grasping her hands and peering into her face as if to look past the smiling mask that mocked him while it prepared to crucify him, the man pleaded with her. “Bella — you — ” but his voice was hoarse and died in his throat. “You — ”

The thin woman held her head high and the light shone down showing the aristocratic line of her dark hair as it grew off the small head — the slight bags under her hard eyes — the deep downward lines from her nose to her large painted mouth. There was a slight wheeze in her chest as she sighed, and her breath smelled of brandy. Reaching out her waxen hand, Mrs. Sand touched Jack’s limp arm.

“If you love her as you claim, you will want her to have the little luxuries she has been accustomed to having, which are out of your power to give and easily within the means of Felix. Poor Zoe will be disabled and ill for some few months; the expense of nurses and doctors will be very great.”

She leaned back. Again that light on her sagging, painted face — in the eyes that sank in their bulging sockets like bright coals in a dying fire. “It is all arranged,” she concluded. “You must leave us now, Jack dear, for in a few moments I wish to go and see Zoe and I expect Felix to go with me.”

He was to go — and his place was to be taken by Felix! Dory turned sick.

Springing up, Jack gestured in Bella’s face:

"I — I won't go," he cried. "I'm going up to her now — up to my girl — she's mine, I tell you, all mine. I have enough money for the necessary things — not enough to support you in luxury, nor Zoe either in luxury, but enough for necessities for her — if I work my fingers to the bone — I'll write all night — all day."

He started for the door. But at that moment it opened and the little white-clad nurse stood beside the tall, distinguished form of Felix Strange.

As in a dream, he walked towards them and addressed Mrs. Sand:

"Nurse says we can go up, Bella," he said. Then seeing Dory like a woe-begone bundle hunched up in a chair in her green coat and bonnet, he took her cold hand and kept it within his own.

Mrs. Sand leered and toyed with her platinum lorgnette as she strove to say something to divert attention from Jack.

Having worked hard the previous day reporting some murder trial and hearing of Zoe's illness Jack had hastened up to the apartment and stayed there all night. At the doctor's hopeless diagnosis, Jack's nerve began to forsake him, and now before anyone knew what he was ready to do, Jack, with trembling hands and distraught, wild eyes, was telling the whole truth to Felix.

Before Felix had seemed to grasp what he was hearing the nurse appeared, and silence thrilled them all. She tiptoed over, her white skirts emitting an odor of antiseptic.

“Is Miss O’Moore still here?” she asked. “Will she kindly come with me at once?”

When Jack dashed forward, the calm, stern look of the nurse dominated him.

“Just Miss O’Moore this time, if you please. The patient wishes to see her alone.”

Pressing Felix’s hand still more tightly one instant, Dory gazed an instant at the three emotion-racked figures, and softly left the room.

She hastened quietly, evenly, dilating her nostrils, keeping her chest high, for premonitions of tragedy were with her and she thought of her own unborn child.

In a few moments she stood beside the spotless white cot in a spotless white room, and on the pillow was the ashen face of Zoe. Her black hair was tightly braided. Her forehead was glazed and her eyes, without the shadow of her black hair, now seemed small and piercing. The skin was tight over her nose so that there were violet places near the nostrils and the large mouth trembled and was drawn down into the full square chin. The room smelled of antiseptic. Dory took the little dark hand in hers. It was dank and felt as if the blood had ceased to flow. “My Zoe,” she whispered. “Don’t talk, darling — you’re going to be all right in a day or two.”

But Zoe shook her head. “I know,” she said, “I know. I have suffered, Dory — a thousand years I lived last night — of pain — of shame — remorse.”

“But, dearest, you didn’t really know — you didn’t

realize — you have suffered, darling — but the doctors have brought you around all right.

“I wish your baby were here now, Dory — cunning little thing it will be — but, Dory, I want to live — to go to Jack and be square — I want so — but Dory I feel — I want the baby now. Funny, isn't it? Hungry — for that baby, but Dory, I tried not to have it — Dory darling, kiss me. Ah — your cheek is warm — you smell sweet, motherly — like a rose. Your face feels good, dear.

“Dory — about love being a holy thing and the responsibility of it — a child — that Nature's law you talked about, Dory — it is true.”

She sank back exhausted. And in what a mad moment of selfishness and rage she had dared to will that her child should perish so that she might keep the flippant gains of her shameful life, keep the spoil of an illicit companionship. Like her mother, she gloried in getting everything and giving nothing. Too late she realized the truth of Dory's words, the responsibility of a woman's love — her responsibility and her duty to the State. How she had laughed at the idea of motherhood and suffrage — women and the State!

Suddenly the pain-racked figure started up. “Dory,” she whispered, “am I really going to be saved? — ”

“Darling, you are both going to be saved. Oh, you must be quiet, dear.”

But again Zoe started up, focusing her glazing eyes straight in front of her.

“ Then why do I see a little baby looking at me like that — so sadly — so — so hopelessly, Dory? Why those voices — why does he reach out his little hands? I can’t take you in my arms, baby — I — can’t take you — now.”

Gently laying her on her back, Dory’s voice fell to a somniferous cooing. “ There — there — Zoe — sleep now — you are tired — very tired.”

But the delirious girl turned to her a face that was haunted.

“ But, Dory,” she whispered, “ that poor baby looks so helpless — his eyes are like Jack’s and they are full — full of tears — and see, he turns his head away from me — he — doesn’t hold his hands out any — any more — I — I — ”

Blindly her arms shoot out towards the spirit of her child — then she falls back once more — cringing, in Dory’s arms. While Dory clasped her, the little form seemed to suddenly wither, to crumple. The room seemed laden with the evanescent souls.

Closing her eyes, Zoe’s little hand relaxed, — a cold, dank wave seemed to sink over Dory as she looked at Zoe — saw those eyes look afar off — a wondering, cringing expression in them — Dory struggled towards the door, crying softly, quickly: “ Nurse — nurse — ” Grasping a chair, she waited while the nurse dropped to her knees and listened to Zoe’s heart for a moment — silence. — Then the nurse rose —

The neat vital figure with the serious face saw that words were unnecessary to the girl who tremblingly

grasped the chair. Quickly she poured a little brandy out for Dory, who swallowed it automatically — breathing carefully, evenly. The nurse let her out — down the narrow, clean, antiseptic hall — down the white iron steps to the reception room they went and there the three figures — Mrs. Sand — Jack fairly doubled up as he gesticulated — Felix distraught — reiterating in a harsh whisper: “ You played a dirty game, Harrington — dirtier than hers even. She was her mother’s child — your child, Bella — so she is a ——— ”

As he was about to give the foul word utterance, Dory reached them — reached the three figures who stood against the strong hospital light quarreling about a dead girl.

Since Zoe’s death some few months had passed. Jack Harrington had disappeared. He had left the country but no one knew where he had gone. Horrible thoughts about Zoe’s tragic ending and poignant, tender thoughts of her own baby marked Dory’s life. Jules regretted the advent of his offspring, but he never voiced this dread to Dory; she seemed such a charming child as she sat making little white clothes and humming lullabies with her soft low voice.

Dory still regretted the necessity of the handsome pupil, Margot Strange, but never showed this jealousy to Jules. He seemed so sensitive a musical medium, so utterly hers as he practised over and over again some aria until the notes fell like jewels, then

weary, he would lie down beside her and bury his face in her hair. Ah, yes — then he seemed utterly hers.

But he spent long hours going over Mrs. Felix Strange's music lessons now three times a week. Three times a week there were ominous fears in his wife's brain which were as improbable as they were terrible. It seemed strange that he should stay so long. Of course, Margot paid huge sums for the lessons. Margot had promised to back Jules' concert tour the following year. Indeed, the impresario had already been paid the first instalment and the advertising had begun.

Old Mr. Blenner persisted in his grim antipathy towards his daughter-in-law. And for Dory it was no cross not to see him. But the curious thing was that Margot Strange, she who had so cleverly supported old Mr. Blenner in all his animus towards his son's marriage, that Margot should now be giving the very help she had advised his father against.

In the little studio Dory sat and sewed. Occasionally she would look out of the window. A great round, rouged cloud floated by in a golden sky. Through the window the heavens looked like a yellow rose with a deep red heart, like the heart of Christ which drenched the world below with its light, even as the love of a woman must drench a man's life with its radiance.

Long she would gaze on the flood of color — vaguely the pretty hand would feel the place beneath her heart. A soft warmth there and ever-growing heaviness made her somnolent. Her sensitive lips smiled as she

thrilled and dreamed of a little boy with straight limbs and a head like a faun — a wilful lad that took her hands in his strong sinuous ones and kissed them. “Mother,” his voice would ring, “you are not like other fellows’ mothers. Somehow *I* tell you everything — you’re such a good, real little mother.” She thrilled at his unconscious grace. She saw him lost in thought, his long lashes sweeping his cheek — his wonderful dark skin with its green shadows — like his father’s. Scarcely able to keep her eyes open, she would take up the dainty white sewing. A strong shaft of light from the wave of color streamed in and enveloped her and even while her eyes caressed it the gold changed — recoiled like some retreating happiness, and swept over the place where it sank into the west. Then came slow solemn streams of deep dark shades which formed themselves into gigantic dragons tipped with flame. And while Dory’s eyes were fixed upon them, her thoughts reverted, as they did each day, to Zoe. She saw again the funeral of the young girl lying in a white casket with lilies near her head, the distraught look in Jack’s eyes as he stood over her — the pale Felix, the maudlin drunken cries of Mrs. Sand, the quiet, shifting people in that luxurious salon that Zoe had so prized. Beneath the carved mantel was placed the coffin. The cold — the harrowing cold of her forehead as Dory kissed it for the last time — Zoe — almost a sister — the harrowing cold of death. She heard that Jack had left the country — had gone to forget Zoe — and himself forever.

Shuddering, Dory thought of Zoe's last words spoken in that sumptuous room. "I would rather stay asleep in my bed of roses forever." How her wilful eyes narrowed and flamed as her sensuous mouth formed the words! Dory shuddered once more and her heart went sad until it hurt the depths of her, and the hot tears welled in her eyes and scalded her throat. The bed was a white coffin and the blanket of roses which Felix had sent only counteracted for a few hours the dank odor of death.

Zoe — Zoe — with her quick impulsive conclusion — with her vicious white teeth — with her strange sensuous movements as she walked and looked at men and wilfully made them forget honor, duty, wife, God — made them only want Zoe, the touch of her, the kiss of her quivering crimson mouth — the smell of her crisp dark hair — the sound of her mocking laughter as it rang on their deafened ears. And for money she went to Felix, and for the taste of power she fascinated many men and abandoned herself to them, and for a fierce animal love she gave all the heart of her to Jack, who crushed her in arms of steel — steel that battled frantically to possess her utterly — steel that was melted by the flame of Zoe's will — flame that burned his reason, poisoned his manhood.

Dory shuddered. Loneliness and helplessness overwhelmed her. Jules was not with her very often these days. She did not allow him to be too conscious of her state. Clever ways of arranging her dress — the green velvet dress with its simple white chiffon collar and

cuffs — the green coat and bonnet — things against which her auburn hair shone in such striking contrast. But the brooding look of a young mother stayed in her purple brown eyes. Energetically she stepped out on the evenings when Jules would return from business arrangements or when he had finished practicing. She would force the heavy limbs to walk along and the aching heart to amuse him with her stories. And indeed there were days when she felt very vital and then she seemed in a state of exaltation — her voice rang in soft, poignant songs and her smile was so infectious that Jules almost forgot what he considered a calamity — the dreaded responsibility.

Now Jules was an hour late. Could he be discussing plans with Margot Strange? Mrs. Strange had never had the grace to call on her, it did seem slighting since she was so intimate with Jules. How Dory disliked that woman! She was beautiful and powerful — and Jules, her darling Jules? But there must be no sadness — no bitterness to depress the life of her child. With an effort she walked over to the piano, trying to ignore the clock, which told her Jules was an hour late. Over the ivory keys her slender hands wandered and finally selected a little song of Theskovsky. Her brain was forced to concentrate upon the melody, and with her eyes closed her heart drank the harmony as a flower drinks the dew.

Jules was very much later than usual and many ill-fareboding thoughts came to upset Dory, as she glanced anxiously from time to time at her clock.

In order to distract herself, she rearranged the flowers and lighted candles, and looked at herself in the mirror, and pretty as she was, forgot she was looking at herself with such sombre eyes.

The hours dragged before Jules finally returned and when she asked what kept him so late, he threw his hat and cane on the table and snapped, "Oh, nothing; can't I have any time to myself, for God's sake!"

"Yes, of course, Jules — if you only telephone me so I won't keep — expecting you. Because this way, you see, I worry."

"Worry about what?"

"That you might be run over — or something — some harm that might come to my boy!"

"Rot."

"Or, — I don't know — it's just if you tell me you will meet me at a certain time I naturally expect you to come even if the meeting-place happens to be our own home."

Jules glanced sullenly at her, and flung himself into his own room.

Doreen called out, "Jules, don't be such a cross-patch! What's the matter? I don't understand you — I —"

"Oh, it's too bad about you! You've made things difficult enough for me ever since our marriage, nothing has gone right!" With this very adequate explanation he took his hat and slammed the door in her face.

Doreen said nothing, but she bit her under lip until

the blood came. Then she sought and called up a note from the precious store of comfort which she had gathered to help her live when life was hard. It was from "Harmonies of Evolution."

"The fundamental doctrine of the Nazarene was the universal brotherhood of man. The fundamental characteristics of the man were compassion, pity and love."

"Compassion, pity and love." Doreen thought of these till again she could sing softly to herself; when Jules returned home his bitter words forgotten and his anger evaporated he found no irate wife confronting him nor even that silence of contempt which was Doreen's first impulse in her outraged pride.

He accepted her smiles and praise, when he played to her, in the same manner that a Pasha accepts the dances of his harem.

CHAPTER XX

THERE came a day when Dory realized she could no longer go about, and weary, she sat at home many times after her housekeeping duties were done. Jules never ceased to regret she must do such work, since it humiliated him when someone called and found her toiling. Nevertheless he was very critical and often would quite lose his temper and complain of her vague ways. "Don't you see that spot away over there on the floor? My cunning little Dory — she never sees anything like that — just content to find a little soft place to sit, and then push the dishes away from her." But always after these patronizing bitter admonitions, he would pet her, sometimes play to her until she smiled; then kiss her and as the situation would reappear to him with its dreaded responsibility, he would kiss her many times more, then impatiently leave "on business," and perhaps return very late to the dinner which the janitor sent up each night at seven o'clock.

And Dory would accept his excuses even though subconsciously she realized he was neglecting her — for no bitterness must enter her heart just now, lest it be transmitted to the little one.

Then one evening as she saw through the window the crescent moon bending her silver self in a rose pearl

sky and Dory leaning out, smiled over her right shoulder — suddenly an icy chill shot through her body and left her teeth chattering. Rushing to the 'phone, she called her doctor. He would be there in a few minutes.

Not until the following week was Dory to go to the hospital.

Again that chill! And this time a racking pain in her back. Would no one ever come? She had not told the doctor she was much alone. "Dear Jesus, help me," sobbed the soft voice. "Blessed Virgin" — and in the darkness a light appeared. A gentle figure with a golden halo held out its arms as Dory prayed: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee" — and while her brain registered many details — things to be prepared — wondering where Jules was — many other things, her heart thanked God for her religion. With that she never could be really forsaken! That fed her spirit. The quiet comprehending consolation! That light in the darkness. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now at the hour of our death. Amen. Ah, Mary Mother, send Jules home to me in this terrible time Ah!" The auburn hair covered her face as she fell to the couch. And at that moment Jules returned.

He realized how late he was and had prepared an excuse as he sped home in Mrs. Strange's car. But in the hall there was no light! Hearing a moan, he ran to the couch and took the quivering girl in his arms.

"The doctor — he will be here in a few minutes —"

he said — “ but hours have passed. It — seems to me, dear — ”

“ My Doreen, what shall I do for you — here, I’ll — ”

“ No — no, nothing but stay — stay here,” she whispered and clung to him as a great pain bore her down and drove the blood from her lips. “ Oh, Jules, don’t go away please — don’t go away and leave me alone here, will you, dear — you won’t leave Dory so alone — I — I’ve been wanting you so! ”

But Jules only wept silently and held her close. Dumbly he cursed the poverty that deprived her of attention. He had never once reproached himself before — but now! He did wish he could have done more. He was thankful that at present no pain racked the little form — only the chill persisted, so he quickly wrapped his coat around her and smoothed the heavy hair off her forehead and then with their tear-streaming cheeks pressed together, the two looked out of the window, like nesting birds, and waited for the doctor.

Though shaking violently, the girl crushed her lip with her teeth and snuggled down into the warm coat and soon became somnolently rested, though the clawing pain had rent her but a few minutes before and though she knew it must return more cruelly again, yet now she relaxed and wilfully reserved her strength. For was this not the first blessed oasis in the desert of despair?

“ My wounded bird — my poor mother girl,” whis-

pered Jules, while his conscience smote him for the neglect during these past months, and for perhaps more — but he would not permit himself to think. He sought to comfort her and in vain sought to understand.

But what could he know of that night on the sands of sorrow in the stifling air of a Purgatory! No man can know. For there each woman, who like a deity is about to create — must wander alone — alone feeling the lid of the sepulchre being sealed over her — feeling that inconsolable regret of life — that secret horror of her child being grasped from her — that still greater terror of its possible defects. Ah, verily her love is purified in the crucible of agony. But also her happiness is intensified a thousand-fold in that realization of a life delivered of her.

Night quickly came. One deep rose cloud flooded another sinking deeper and deeper in tone. Grey gleamed over the rose and became purple and the trees of the park like silent sentinels — violet-clad, were silhouetted solemnly against it. Purple gave way when the first star appeared. Nature was accomplishing its laws and soon the mighty mantle of darkness swept the heavens.

CHAPTER XXI

FIVE weeks later, Jules was waiting for Mrs. Felix Strange in her music room. Grey damask covered the high walls, a plain carpet of a deeper color covered the floor. Isolated in a far corner was a concert grand piano on which was placed an ivory bowl filled with fresh violets. In the fireplace burned a low, crackling fire. Over it hung an oval-shaped portrait of Margot Strange by Sargent. It was quite early in the afternoon but the outer ivory silk curtains were drawn. One alabaster lamp radiated light like a pale moon's. Two couches faced each other at either side of the fireplace, and the place had an air of restful emptiness.

Jules exercised his fingers on the couch seat. First one hand, then the other. Then rubbed them as he regarded them with what was really absorbing interest. He thought of Dory's return to the studio room two days before — Dory with their little son. A boy! Jules felt he should be very proud — and superior.

At that moment Margot Strange glided into the room. The seal-colored silk gown clung to her figure and accentuated her languorous beauty.

Jules stooped and kissed her hand.

"How is the son and heir," inquired Margot.

“ Yes, *air* is about all he'll have, poor youngster — but he's a beauty, Margot. I'd hoped he's soften Dad's heart, but he won't even see him! ”

“ Very unusual for a child to be born with black hair growing on its head,” laughed Mrs. Strange. “ Makes him look so like you, Jules. I suppose that will fall out now — very soon — they say it does. How is father treating *you*? ”

“ Oh, he is true to the colors — I thought perhaps when Dory and the boy came home, he might pay us a visit — but no chance. He paid the hospital bill and even gave me a hundred plunks and seems to think he deserves a crown from Heaven for doing it.”

Jules started to walk to the 'phone in a nervous way he had that was very familiar to Mrs. Strange. She bit her lip and then sank back in a huge dark pillow on the lounge.

“ Well, you don't have to worry about next season's tour, as I am attending to that. The manager has just asked for another thousand for the bill posters.”

“ Oh, Margot, that makes six thousand so far within a few months! ”

“ Yes, but the manager said *ten* for the first year, you know! You are going to be interviewed next week for some article about pianists. It's going to be a whole page in a Sunday supplement of the *Planet*. That will help to get you in 'the public eye.' The publicity man was paid five hundred dollars last week.”

“Margot, how wonderful you are to me!”

Almost imperceptibly she drew nearer to him. “I wish — I might be — everything — I —” But checking the jealousy that rose irresistibly to her lips, she quickly added something in a cold tone about the business of his tour which she was financially backing. “The first engagement will be here in New York City, at Vocalian Hall. The rent of the hall will be \$1,500, and we must fill it, by paper if in no other way — and several critics must — er — er — listen in a — friendly way — so that the papers will be full of the arrival of a new genius the following day. Then, clothes, Jules, you understand they are very important. You must have the appearance of success. You had better go to Hammond on the Avenue and order a complete wardrobe. Your name is good, — they will send you a bill and you must bring it to me.”

“But, Margot —”

With an impatient wave of her hand, she added: “I know that sounds debasing and would be in the ordinary sense. But it is merely a *necessary* part of the arrangements for your success on the stage.”

Only that morning Dory had said: “Oh, dearest, how wonderful it will be next year. Just think, all the world will know you as ‘The Great Jules Blenner’ as I do!” Her kiss seemed scarcely dry on his mouth. He shuddered when he thought of the cheap little room she was lying in off his studio. He simply would not think of the baby. Dear snuggling little

bundle of his! Thoughts of them and his powerlessness — seemed to cramp his soul — he could not play if he dwelt on it too long. God — he would be a failure at his debut — after all his life of preparation. All his body was sensitized to be the reed of master composers; his brain — to be the medium of that intangible thing of the spirit — harmony.

He had been constantly tapping his fingers on his knee — tensing them at the joint from habit, and as he swept Dory out of his mind he sighed and looked with pleasure around that palatial room. And Margot — who sank deeper in the huge amber-colored pillow — Margot, with that black fluffy hair — the loose large mouth — rather long nose — the cool perfumed hands with their shining pink nails and that odor of amber about her. The luxury of the moment pleased him. He wanted to play — now.

“Stay with me this afternoon, Jules,” pleaded Margot. “We’ll forget about the lesson and at five we’ll go to vespers at the Cathedral.”

“*You* to the Cathedral, Margot? I never knew you went to church!”

“I scarcely ever do — but I thought it would please you to go. You — under this *new* influence of your wife — you seem to have taken to religion lately.”

“Oh, yes,” said Jules, and the incessant dumb practicing on his knees grew quicker. “Yes, Margot dear. Occasionally I go into the church — to mass — and immediately, in that beautiful enclosure, I leave

the common riff-raff in which I live, behind — the common herd is far away. In that temple, with the dark jeweled windows — those colors that satisfy every craving of my eyes for beauty — I kneel awhile, and I hear that music — so sweet ” — (and closing his eyes, Jules gesticulated like an Italian. He raised his shoulders ecstatically as he continued) — “Harmony vibrating in every corner of that vast place, tingling in my nerves to the very tips of my fingers — and as it rises to its fullest melody of bells ” — Jules raised his hands and paused for a moment as his eyes expressed the devout congregation — “the people hold their breath — and then again — those bells — the faint smell of incense rises over us. The priest in his wonderful raiment, lifts the — the what is it — the sacrament — before giving them the blessed bread to eat — ah, Margot, if only at that moment a beautiful woman appeared — as God made her — perhaps some scant Greek robe draped around her — and danced — as they did in the Hindoo service — ”

“Jules! ”

“Yes, every sense is appealed to — sight — hearing — taste — smell — every one but feeling. Ah, the Hindoos understood that woman is the most wonderful stimulation of all! ” This unguarded speech was accompanied with many gestures.

“My poetic Jules! ” Margot passed her hand slowly over his. “I fear you can’t be saved! You are incorrigible! ” He kissed the hand, ignoring the fact that she wished to leave it within his. He

almost pushed it away. A fear of something quite impalpable passed over him. Shutting it out, he lighted a cigarette and went over to the piano and as he smoked, played. He poured himself into the *Fantasia* of Chopin — and the spirit of Chopin poured itself through him. His thoughts ceased when music began, and as the music was divine, so was the transformation of his face divine — the pearly perfection of his notes — the deep, delicate throb seemed inconsistent with the man's own moral weakness. What angel of light guided his hand causing those poignant vibrations to fill the room — what demon of darkness dampened Mrs. Strange's languorous eyes as at the finale she went slowly to the piano!

Leaning over it, she mutely thanked him by slowly pressing her finger-tips over his hand.

Jules felt as if some sensual spirit had stolen out of a world of mystery. Was it the amber perfume — the violets in the ivory bowl? Or that loose, smiling mouth of Margot Strange! Quickly he leaned over and kissed her.

"How happy we have been this last week," whispered Margot. Think of the time we have lost, boy — all, all the time when I have not belonged to you I count lost."

But Jules scarcely heard her words; he only knew that for months she had excited his senses with her nearness to him. Now, for a week she had been his, all his. He thought of nothing else but selfish, satisfied sensuality when he possessed her. After? Each

time remorse. But now once more he thought only of the essence of the moment.

Suddenly, startled at some sound, Margot looked quickly over Jules' shoulder. It had grown quite dark in the room. As Jules was about to reassure her, the woman in his arms with the disheveled hair screamed. For close to them, like a mad girl, was the staring, white face of Dory.

.
Jealousy had possessed her as she waited in vain for Jules' return to her and the child. Jealousy gave her the strength to dress and go to the Strange house — the cunning to get into the house quietly without ringing the bell, while the butler happened to be at the door — and she sped up the stairs and to the right, through the damask curtains to — death and disillusion.

The cold wave of a year's disillusion seemed to break over her as the blood left her head and she softly advanced towards them. For a moment there was an eternity of suffocation.

But before the petrified couple came to life, Doreen had tottered towards the door, had run down the stairs and had been lost in the New York crowds.

CHAPTER XXII

SOME hours later, Dory found herself standing in the drug shop on 23rd Street and 4th Avenue. Much walking had cleared her brain. She was quite controlled and positive about her course of action.

Economic independence she must have. Remembering that Felix Strange had offered her a position as a singer in his Club, to furnish part of the musical programme every evening, at fifty dollars a week, she decided to call Felix up at his office. Then, too, was Felix not her only friend now? There really was no one else she cared about, — no woman friend, no relative.

"1-5-0-2 Greeley," she called through the 'phone tube.

"Mr. Strange? "

"Just a moment. "

Then his resonant voice: "Yes? "

"This is Dory, Felix. I am in trouble and need you, Felix. Will you come to me? "

"But where are you, child? "

She told, adding, "I really need you right away if you could manage it."

"Yes, surely, Dory. I'll hop in my car and pick you up in about ten minutes."

Myriads of people passed by — all intent upon their own interests — hurrying. One jostled her into a corner — a “vague gawk” of a girl had no business blocking the traffic — they must have room to scurry away.

An old paper woman asked her if she'd like the Evening Journal. Yes — Dory handed her a nickel, telling her to keep it.

“Well, God love ye — that's the best five cents ye iver spint!”

The Stranges' limousine stopped noiselessly at the door and Felix stepped out, and leaned his chamois-gloved hand upon his cane as he looked about. Then people saw him walk towards the red-haired girl crouched in the corner and lead and lift her tenderly into the deep-cushioned car. As they drove away, their hands were clasped quietly together.

“Through the Park,” called Felix to his chauffeur. “Now, Dory dear, don't talk, relax your poor little hand and let the air bring back color to those dear cheeks.”

“First, Felix, did you mean what you said about the fifty a week salary at the Strange Club if I wished to work?” She spoke like a marionette — her voice seemed to be no part of her.

“Yes, of course.”

“Well I accept — that is the first and most important help.”

“You know, dear, if you need money, I'd gladly

let you have some without working, but you have always been so very proud."

"No — no, Felix, but for this *job* I'm thankful."

Then quite abruptly she said:

"Would you give me the first week's salary in advance? "

"Certainly."

"I need it. I have left Jules — I have to take the baby over to that hotel in Washington Square today. I'll move from there in a week to Forest Hills, where I can afford to hire a little girl for \$20 a month, and board for two is \$24 a week, and there will be plenty for extras for baby and me."

"Now tell me everything, Dory."

But she turned her head and looked out of the window as one does when one is riding along a flowery plain on a lovely day in a black-draped carriage behind a hearse.

"I don't know how I can tell you, Felix — you to whom I feel nearer than anyone on earth. You are the last person I can really — tell."

In that moment Dory resembled her mother.

Felix understood that he must not press her. There was something about the brevity of her sentences — the stoicism of her manner — that had the finality of death.

Suddenly a light! "I — I *think* I know, Dory," he said, "the — "

Dory turned to him. "You *can't* know! " The

tacit response enlightened Felix. "No — no — not you! "

"Margot — " he began, in a tone which he decided could be formed into some trivial remark if Dory did not immediately respond.

Grasping his hand tighter, she asked quickly: "How did you know, Felix — Felix? "

"Tell me one thing, Dory — did you — did you see — you mean you *witnessed* — "

"Yes."

"Thank God! "

"Why do you say that, Felix? "

"I'm sorry — it's selfish, Dory. But sooner or later you must know of what frail stuff Jules is made and I — I have *known* for years how rotten Margot is — what an underhanded game she plays"

"Felix, there are things which are so delicate and so terrible in this world — I — I could never really be a witness — I mean on the stand. It doesn't seem real — all this — does it — it does not seem real — does it to you? "

"Oh, damn real to me, Dory. I'll divorce her now, all right — some time ago in any of the several other affairs she's had since our marriage, I'd let her get one from me — but now — now — *now* for this, I'll show her up! Don't worry, dear child — no one else shall hurt you or humiliate you."

Dory never remembered much about the rest of their conversation as they sped back through the Park. It seemed to consist of disjointed sentences

about Jules, Margot, Zoe, Felix, the baby and herself.

“ You will come to see me at the hotel, Felix? ”

“ When? ”

“ Tomorrow.”

“ Good-bye — God bless you, child.”

CHAPTER XXIII

DORY'S room in the Dutland Hotel overlooked Washington Park — from another direction than the studio which she had left.

Sun flickered in upon the dingy furniture from the alcove, where the nurse slept. From below one heard the busses go by — and the chatter of people in the next room. One smelt the strong odor of fish which was invariably cooked with onions and cabbage, and still later, one tasted the dish which was always in some way spoiled — burned, over-seasoned — a little bit bad, perhaps laden with heavy grease. And indeed grease seemed everywhere. There was even grease on the banisters — one felt it if by any chance one were seeking for support to descend the steep steps.

Like a child Jules had wept and begged her to forgive him. He had told her he would shoot himself if she left him and that she would be responsible for his death. He swore that Margot Strange was nothing to him but something to satisfy the senses. True, she had begged him, Jules, to leave his wife and go away with her, but he had no intention of doing it! He told Dory so with a touch of pride.

“You are my life — I can't go on without you,” this he repeated over and over.

“Oh, Jules,” said Dory, “how can you say that — you lie to me always — your unfaithfulness —”

“ Yes — yes — it is hideous, Dory — but listen to me — try to understand, Dory — it was a mere physical infidelity — you are so young and innocent, dearest — but you know from now after this horrible experience — that *that* happens to all men — it is nothing connected with their minds — or hearts — it is something over which they have no control — it’s a thing for which they are not blamed by God nor the world.”

“ Jules, if I had been unfaithful to you — what then? ”

“ But with a woman it is different — if she loses her virtue she is an outcast — branded by the world as a sinner — that is the way of the world, Dory — ”

“ I don’t agree.”

“ It is a recognized fact, nevertheless.”

“ A sin is a wrong thing regardless of the person’s sex who committed it.”

“ Dearest, I’m not trying to palliate the wrong I’ve done, but you must remember a man can sin and care for another woman with all his heart and mind and body, as I do for you — ”

“ No man, nor woman, can do that.”

“ But Dory, you’re impossible, the way you insist upon this — you talk like a suffragette — ”

“ That is what I am, with all the ardor of my youth and strength! ”

And before the fierce fire in her eyes the man recoiled — and buried his head in his hands. “ Oh, Dory,” he cried, “ if you will only try to forget this

you will never regret it! I need you so — I need you to counsel me — to — to love me — and yet, just on the eve of my success — you forsake me — ! ”

“ The success which has been paid for by that woman! ”

“ But I’ll give all that up — I’ll never play again, Dory.” And he spoke of doing many other things which he knew she would not permit him to do.

In the midst of this, Dory said in a quiet voice: “ No, Jules — make your success — I wish only what is good for you, and you need not feel it is given you by — her — remember *her* money has all been given by Felix. It is Felix who has given the money! ”

“ But I’ll give it all up, I tell you — all, all — everything! God, what do I want with it now? ”

Dory realized, as Jules did, that he had no intention of giving it up, but she sat down and talked calmly to him. “ You must remember, there are other people concerned now — the impresario with whom you have signed a contract and who has agreed to give you practically all his time — would be out of a job for a year — his family would suffer — the publicity man — your accompanist. It is too late for you to turn back — go and do your work like a real person — earn the money and pay them back — pay back in a year as you unquestionably can, since now everyone is looking forward eagerly to hearing the great — Jules Blenner.”

He dropped to his knees before her. “ Dory, my

mother girl, won't you forgive me? You won't take the baby and leave me, will you? "

And as he saw the softened look in her face, he added: "Try to remember that this is *not* a sin for a man — a physical infidelity does not mean damnation, as it would with a woman! "

"And I repeat a sin is a sin regardless of the sex of the person who commits it. But," and her voice lowered like the saddest music as she spoke slowly and distinctly, "I do not condemn you for that, Jules — anyone is liable to fall — anyone — as far as that is concerned, Jules, I forgive you — quite — *quite entirely*. It is for something very different that I have decided to live away from you. It is for your cruel neglect of me during my illness — your bitter words to me about all the little unimportant things that would hurt me day by day — for which at the time I never reproved you — and the final fact that you were unfaithful to me such a little while after the birth of your child — simply weak and unfaithful — you went to another woman after all I had been to you. And in that moment you killed my love — my love for you died in a moment, that can never be wiped from my memory."

But he fell upon his knees and begged her to listen once more. "My girl, you are mine — mine — you imagine all this — it's only a horrible dream! It never happened, I tell you — you must try to think that, Dory — it never happened! "

But her voice was still steady, and she was unmoved by the well-known frenzies of her husband.

“ You think I am still your wife, because you see me standing before you. It is only that, unlike Jack, who fainted as he saw Zoe’s coffin descending into the ground, — *you* have not seen my body lowered into my grave. But my heart, my heart, is quite dead, Jules — as far as you are concerned.”

CHAPTER XXIV

ON the evening of the same day Felix knocked at the door and was bidden to enter. There was Mrs. Jules Blenner standing near the crib of her baby son. She seemed like a pale rose trembling in a brutal wind.

“Hallo, Dory!”

She smiled as she came towards him. Felix noted with pleasure that once more she was very slender — her body tapering as did her long rounded limbs, and with her lazy movements, she seemed to radiate a strange quiet.

“You have not seen my beautiful small son yet, have you, Felix?”

He admitted that at the hospital he had only caught a glimpse of a very wriggling bundle.

And so Dory led him over to the little basket and as he heartily showed his approval and experienced the delightful sensation of a surprisingly strong tiny fist clasp ing his index finger, he looked at the young mother whose soul seemed to rise and shine in her eyes like an exquisite dark flower on the surface of a silvery pool.

For some time they talked, going over all the past from the time that Felix knew Dory's mother. They

talked of Mrs. Sand; Felix said she was now in a sanitarium for the hopelessly insane.

“The expenses are not very large — but I have agreed to pay them — always.”

“Ah, Felix — that is good of you.”

“No, no. She’s just a poor old wreck. God knows she is paying for her wrongs now — as for Zoe.”

“Ah, Felix, try to feel toward Zoe as I — after long prayer — managed to feel toward Jules. It is hard — hard — one must pray for it! But *don’t* send her any evil thoughts where she is — nor judge her for her sins. It seems so pitiful for one little mortal to stand up and judge another little mortal for its sin. How God must laugh! He who sees the monstrous hand of circumstance driving us! If our souls could only expand to be in tune with His. ‘He that hath not sinned — let him cast the first stone.’ Where is there a finer line than that?”

“Oh, yes,” said Felix, as he fumbled a trifle uncomfortably. “Christ was certainly greater than Shakespeare.”

Dory made a little moue at him. “Sacrilegious Felix!”

“But you know, Dory, you have made me think. I was very serious and straight and all that sort of thing when I married Margot, but when I saw her game and how little there was in it for me, I switched off. One of the ‘people,’ as you know, was Zoe — but there were others before that. At those times, I thought only of myself — and while I’ve caused some

suffering in my life, I, — well, that line about ‘Let him who has not sinned’ is a good one, dear, very good. Once I was in love, really in *love*, when I was very young; the chances were good for home, children, all those things that I — I really wanted. But she was declass   — from my ambitious mother’s point of view — and I seem to have been a dirty little snob, though I must admit I did fight against it.”

“Is that the girl who committed suicide?”

“Yes, Dory.” He contracted his brows till the lines between them were painfully bent and fumbled nervously with his cigarette case.

To change the subject, Dory talked of Harry Balster. “Do you ever hear of him?”

“Oh, yes. He comes to see my wife very often. His love of scandal absolutely satisfies Margot. He’s really feminine in his love of Mrs. Grundy — ”

“Ah, Felix, it seems to me there are just as many men rotters as there are women — and as many decent men as there are women. All this business of giving sex to sins seems wrong and unjust to me. Take our own lives for instance!”

“Yes, yes,” as he slunk down in his chair and selected a gold-tipped cigarette from a long jeweled case.

“Felix,” said Dory earnestly, “for every Harry Balster there is a Margot Strange.”

“That’s right — right, Dory, absolutely. Well put, too. You know, dear, you are a clever child. You must be ambitious and make something of yourself.

I feel you have a message of some kind for the world. Ah, if there is ever anything I can do to pay back your enormous service to me in ridding me of that wife of mine. I tell you, Dory, that among other things, she is the most arrant liar. I could never get the truth out of her. Pussy-footing is about the only thing that interests her. That woman positively could not exist without an intrigue of some kind. And yet she sticks on to me. Of course it's only for money and position. I've known this for years. And while Jules has shown himself up to be just about as rotten and small as his colleague, Jack Harrington, I think that Margot is entirely culpable in this case."

"Felix, in this case, the man and woman, Jules and Margot, are equally culpable — quite equally."

"Well, all right, child, have it your own way." And he gazed with a smile at the violet rings of smoke he blew up to the dirty ceiling — and years seemed to drop from his brow as he thought that at last he would be rid of that virulent woman. Some alimony she'd have — oh, yes! — but not too damn much! It was almost inconceivable to him — to the passive, controlled Felix Strange, that he could hate anyone as much as he now hated his wife.

While he paused, Dory thought of the day that Margot Strange helped if indeed she did not entirely cause Jules' father to humiliate — repudiate her and her babe. Then she said: "Does it not seem strange, Felix, that I, who have been practically sent from Jules' father's house by the respected Margot

Strange's influence — as if I were a foul thing — that I, Doreen Blenner, should be the influence that causes her to be sent ignominiously from her high state by her own husband, who can prove that she is a foul thing! ”

“ Yes, Dory, it is the law of compensation.”

And once more he gazed at the smoke rings, and this time up to the dirty ceiling. “ I say, Dory, this place is an awful hole; you must let me give you some money.”

“ No; I shall have plenty in my salary, — thanks, my friend.”

“ How wonderful she is,” thought Felix. “ Women like Dory are wonderful creatures. They have the great hearts whose warmth keeps the world alive — they have beauty and intelligence, they are super-women! “ Yes,” thought Felix, reflecting once more as his eye smiled upon Dory's luxuriant red hair, “ they are very few — like this — damn few! ” And he threw his cigarette into the fireplace as he rose to go.

“ Well then, Dory, on Friday, home? ”

“ Yes,” she said as her gentle solemn eyes interrogated him. “ You know, Felix, I don't quite understand about your club — ”

Whereat Felix became once more very explicit. “ The purpose of the Strange Club, is to bring together magazine writers interested — as they all are, in one of the great subjects of the times. These speak and listen to their fellows speak and once a week I

publish in the Strange Magazine two of the articles that are written as a result of this.

“Oh, Felix, I meditate very often on the subject of child labor. The crime of it — the abolition of that and the wisdom of vocational training” — she tautened and declared “I could lecture on the subject.”

“Dory, child, you have the expression of a beautiful prophetess — you shall speak this very next Friday if you’ll make out notes and let me look them over — ”

“You mean that, Felix? ”

It was Felix who introduced Dory. Taking her hand like a little child’s, he led her upon the platform. In a few words he told the audience of this new, inexperienced lecturer, in whose heart burned the desire for the abolition of child labor so ardently that he was glad to give her the opportunity of expressing it to the members of his Society as she had to him. There was a faint stir in the audience, for Dory now looked younger than her twenty years. The arrangement of her red hair gave the effect of its being bobbed. The blood which was so near her skin had suffused the delicate surface with rose. She wore a severely-cut dark green dress buttoned tightly with braided frogs across her bust, like a little boy’s jacket, exposing a column-like throat, with a white, turned-down collar of the same material as the plain cuffs at her wrists. She still had that strange quiet

which seemed to emanate from her ever since the time of her sorrow, and in her brown eyes was the spiritual light of the fanatic.

Of her audience she felt no fear, though she glanced from time to time at her notes on the little table near by. For the most part, the words seemed to flow miraculously through her, out of the universe.

From the introduction she held the people with the soft richness, the delicate intonations of her voice, and she spoke with the eloquence of an inspired priestess.

She had few notes and evidently well understood her subject — child labor.

Concealing his nervousness, Felix sat down in the front row scarcely hearing her lovely voice, just praying for her success. Because of his “stage-fright” for her, he caught but morsels of the lecture. From her notes she read:

“As Don Marquis remarked, ‘One trouble with this country is that so many persons think that a matter has been settled as soon as a committee is formed and a few slogans are written.’ But what actually are we going to do,” she asked, “and do at once about the overworked, underfed child of America?”

“We must eradicate this before we can even consider any other so-called important needs of our country. Of course we want to protect all the children of our nation and develop them to be normal, intelligent, efficient citizens. We know that the ages

of between fourteen and sixteen are particularly plastic years."

Felix cringed from an ominous intuition — what was Doreen going to do — he remembered that between fourteen and sixteen was the age of most of Balster's employees! Was she going to denounce him publicly? She would ruin him!

"And yet — the burden of family support falls on these children particularly in our factory towns. Not only the body of these poor children is ground into the machinery for the consummation of money lords, but their plastic sensitive minds — hence their pathetic and eventually degenerate morals. Any individual who interferes with the childhood of our nation, who retards its development, should be regarded as a criminal."

Here there was applause. Doreen stopped and continued; she proceeded to describe the sordid condition of the children found working in packing houses, candy-makers, children working in the beet fields, the cotton fields, and worst of all in all kinds of factories, sweat-shops and artificial flower factories.

"The irony of it!" she cried. "And I ask you" — she was dramatic in her appeal, "do you as loyal Americans approve of any man so lacking in heart and conscience that he boasts of employing three hundred children making artificial flowers in one of his factories?"

Felix went ashen pale, his revenge and Doreen's

was to be realized with the revenge of countless cheated children.

"Well then," she asked, "I tell you that Mr. Harry Balster, the man our people propose for a public office, is the owner of several factories and that he fattens on child labor. Do you think that should be tolerated? I can prove this outrage is true, and I call upon you, one and all, to join me in denouncing him and his kind."

The applause was great and lasted for many moments; there were tears in the eyes of her audience. She had triumphed. Her few concluding lines were spoken gravely, quietly. Beyond doubt she had convinced the people, of that there was no doubt. Felix helped her descend from the speaker's platform and, seeing that she was confused and embarrassed, spared her the ordeal of meeting the many people who awaited an introduction. He led her away to his private office. "You were glorious," he whispered, "We'll talk about it tomorrow," and hustled her into his waiting car.

She found the baby sleeping peacefully beside his nurse and a great flood of nameless emotions closed over Doreen. She went quickly to her room grasping her aching throat. After closing the door quietly behind her, Dory flung herself down on the floor and sobbed, throwing her body like a wild thing from side to side and reaching her arms up like twisted little branches to the sky.

When the storm of her weeping was over, thoughts

came as flowers bloom in the silence after a heavy rain. Her vague fingers found the note-book she kept as she read, and that at night was always kept near her pillow.

“Discriminate between justice and selfishness.”

“Say not in presumptuous pride that you will bear all suffering, say rather you will uplift the world by being better and happier yourself.”

“Misery like happiness is contagious.”

“To be miserable is but to increase the misery of the world.”

“To be joyful is to increase the joy of the world.”

There were two hours with these thoughts and these alone, then Dory bathed her face in Eau de Cologne. “Now I am peaceful, little soul,” she breathed.

CHAPTER XXV

SILVIA VAN TWILLER surveyed herself in the mirror. "Not so good," she finally decided. Wrapping her shabby dressing-robe about her, she shivered and sat down upon the bed.

"Well, this is certainly a fine ending!" she continued aloud. Silvia was addressing her wardrobe trunk and she shrugged her heavy shoulders at the room in contempt.

"It's getting to be the same old story," said she. "No money, no friend, no job! Nothing much to this bachelor life for me any longer, I guess!"

Taking her clothes out of the trunk she started to arrange them. She sniffed at the musty smelling oak wardrobe with its defective mirror, and swore at the oak bureau whose drawers stuck. There was also one iron bed and one kitchen chair. "Gee whiz," said Silvia, "this room is just furnished and that is all." In her rummaging she came across a crystal flask which had been given her by Belle Sand. This brought another sniff. "Just as well you're in the coo-coo factory, Bella, my dear, the good old days of a pint for a dollar are gone forever!"

This speech seemed to amuse Silvia very much, and she began to gesticulate and nod her head so violently that she would seem to a mere onlooker, pretty well on the road to "Coo-coodom" herself.

Then suddenly an idea fixed itself in her mind. She lighted a cigarette and sat down on the bed. Why not try for Harry herself! Bella was out of the way. He had been publicly disgraced by that clever O'Moore girl — the papers had not stopped jeering at him and constantly reminded him America did not want him; well, Silvia reasoned, he had a flock of money and she preferred Europe to America, — any day. He had gone in for flappers lately and had been properly stung and — she might get him on the rebound. "If I can get hold of the stupid old ox, I will marry him, anything would be better than this!" She began humming a popular song, "If you don't think so, you're crazy," and was quite cheerful. Then out came the old electric iron and Silvia set to work. The black satin gown was pressed, the black suede slippers were powdered, the best pair of silk stockings from the drawer full of defectives were selected. Then there was her own person which took quite an hour. The few wisps of burnt hair were screwed up on top of her head, and the freshly coiled transformation did credit to the hairdresser. At last Silvia was complete. A luncheon engagement was made with Harry and she sat down to enjoy a cigarette and a conversation with herself before starting. "Very shortly the curtain goes up," said she to herself, "you are the sad little woman who craves the companionship which only a gentle cultured man like Harry can give you. He will not believe you at first — but you will convince him before the luncheon is over." Silvia

looked in the mirror. Yes, the character was dressed correctly. She could find no fault with that. "He will allow no one but himself to protect you — or else —" she flung the cigarette into a glass, "or else you're a hell of a poor actress!"

So it came to pass that Harry Balster met his Waterloo. Three months later, Mr. and Mrs. Balster were in Paris on their honeymoon and no more miserable man could be found than the ox-like Harry.

CHAPTER XXVI

TWO months passed. Already Dory had become a fervent and eloquent public speaker whose presence at the Strange and other institutions became a feature of New York life.

The month of April. Spring. The eternal miracle of spring and all living things pulsed to its embrace and promise. Two months Dory had lived away from her husband and the baby had grown while she worked for him — and audiences had wept and had been inspired by her.

Jules had taken what money he had (very little) and had left for Paris, where he assured himself he would find real appreciation of his art and personal oblivion.

Jules in Paris, Doreen in Forest Hills — from the sublime to the — er — suburban, you may say. But in that prosaic town on Long Island one smells the flowers of spring — one feels the sympathy of one's fellow citizens — one tastes the rich milk of America and sees the quaint charming little homes that speak protection.

And into her room down in Forest Hills, the moonlight streamed after Doreen had spent herself singing or discoursing. Moonlight on the face of her babe, who snuggled to her breast clutched her silken throat

with warm vague fingers. Did the little fellow sense the empty hurt which caused such a deep sigh as she laid him on his pillow?

Perhaps it was to cheer her in the morning that he chuckled so when she put him in his bath, and he made droll little grimaces when she dried him in hot towels and took him once more to her breast.

That morning at the telephone, she learned that her old friend, Sister Sebastian, was in New York for a few days and wished to see her. It was not very long before the kindly old woman had Dory in her arms, and was kissing her on both cheeks. To this dear friend Dory had written many of the events of her own and of Zoe's life since the time they had left the convent, and the letters she had written to Dory in response were always comprehending, protective, and full of warnings.

"Ah, and the little baby, is he well?"

And Dory delivered a panegyric on the baby.

"But what a wonderful girl you are, Dory—I have read accounts of your discourses and everyone talks of them. We agree about the wisdom of vocational training. There are few spirits like yours valiant enough to triumph over difficulties."

"Oh," Dory closed her eyes and shrugged her shoulders, "it . . ."

But the nun insisted, "Yes, Dory, you are the exception. God has called you for some great work in the world! Because of your teachings the way will be made easier for hosts of children."

"But no — I," Dory was confused.

"And you are an example. We are so proud of you — you are a good mother, and therefore prove the doctrines you preach."

But Dory stopped her. "Sister," she said, "I am doing a thing now that I know to be wrong. Theoretically, I suppose I'm right. Most women seem to think it right to leave their husbands if they are unfaithful to them — you have heard of our separation? "

"Yes."

"But I feel — I feel something is wrong," said Dory.

"Ah, child, I knew your heart would speak. I must tell you that Jules wrote to me and begged me to intercede for him with you and now as I come to you, my poor Dory, I know that all these long years you spent with us, when, unlike the other girls, you used to go of your own accord and remain long hours every day in meditation, will help you now. I know that heavenly lights permeated your soul, and gave you more intelligence than the ordinary girl — more heart — more refinement." And she looked into the wistful face.

"I will spare you telling me the details — Jules has confessed his sin. They say he is a good musician."

"Oh, Sister, he is a divine musician! "

"My child, when one thinks of the geniuses of all centuries it would seem that the more sensitive

they are to art, the more gifted the spirit of our great musicians, the more pathetically of the earth is the flesh that envelops it! Sinned he has indeed, my child, but the blessing of your forgiveness can be greater than the iniquity of his sin."

But Dory could not tell the holy woman that 'au fond' — it was not alone the breaking of a commandment. She heard the gentle voice of the nun continue, "When you hear him play —"

When he played! — In fancy Dory did hear him, the soft touch of his muscular hands upon the keys — she heard! Indeed the greater the gift of the musician's spirit the more pathetically of the earth seems the flesh that envelops it! Thought! There is nothing more wonderful than the exquisite world created by thought. Through the minds of inspired thinkers we can indeed choose what path we wish to traverse; down the apple blossom one of spring-time to the sound of silver flutes which Beethoven has composed; through the deep shadows of some mysterious moonlit forest, to the sound of some sonorous organ. And the creators of these worlds?

Jules, as he bent over his instrument, ruled people's souls — their spirits turned towards their God as they were sensitized by the music of — one like Jules!

"Dory, do you hear me?"

"Pardon, Sister?"

"I say, suppose God took your child from you even as you have taken him away from Jules?"

A wave of human kindness passed over Dory — a

normal craving for her child's father. Her baby and her husband!

At that moment the Angelus rung. "Now go to Chapel, dear — stay alone — for an hour. Then I will come. Our Lord will help you. Dory, I feel way within me that you will return *because it is your duty to return.*"

The words of Christ were mentally written before her — "I am the way, the truth, and the light." Ah, surely by this he meant the true ego — our inner selves. "Likeness unto Me." Meditating upon these words, Dory listened to her conscience, for she knew that in the silence, it would permeate her with the knowledge of wrong — of right.

Forgiveness — "Go and sin no more," Christ had said after having freely forgiven.

And then in the silence, Dory drew still more within herself. She turned and turned the little band of gold in her fingers. Suddenly the words Jules spoke as he placed it there resounded — "With this ring I thee wed —" and hot tears were in her eyes as she gazed blindly at the tapestry which hung on the stone wall.

She wondered in a panic-stricken way what had become of Jules. She had received no word of him in months. What was he doing! Perhaps starving — perhaps dead in Paris.

She no longer thought of his cruelty to her, to their child. The dominant passion of a real woman possessed her; the thing which Zoe had been born without, the instinct countless women never know, — Mater-

nity! That quality possessed countless times by those who have never realized its completion as in the case of those fortunate ones who bring life into the world. It is a real woman's protective impulse for any helpless creature, be it man, woman or child. And where her own heart is concerned how poignant this impulse becomes!

In the silence, Doreen forgave Jules. His inevitable helplessness brought an ache to her throat. Everything else faded into insignificance.

.
Just a month later old Mr. Blenner died. He was found in his chair one afternoon with his hand gripping some money in his pockets and the poor old body quite rigid.

But near the end he had been enlightened and his heart had changed, as you will see by the copy of his will.

"This is my last will and testament. I wish my son Jules to have absolutely no authority over any material thing belonging to me. He has betrayed his wife and mother of his child and has all his life-long taken the course of least resistance regardless of the happiness of those about him.

"I bequeath all my possessions to my grandson, Shawn Blenner, and wish his mother, my esteemed daughter-in-law, to be appointed his rightful guardian."

CHAPTER XXVII

AN emaciated creature strode into a cheap café in Montmartre, a cabaret in Paris which was so filthy that even curious tourists would not descend, which is saying something. It reeked of smoke, of evil smells. At the greasy tottering tables many creatures sat like phantasms — most of them hollow-eyed slovens; a few over-hilarious, a few hopelessly depressed.

Someone was playing a “jazz” on the piano, but no one paid much attention. Suddenly an Apache cried, “Ask the American to play an old-time rag, they were the best years ago when I was a youth.”

“*Dites donc*, American, can you play a tune called ‘Take me back to New York town’?”

“Yes — *mais oui, monsieur!*”

The Apache went over to sit with the newcomer. Newcomers interested him, for more reasons than one.

“Ah,” said he to the emaciated one, “the music of the Americans, it is like wine to my soul — I have never been in that country myself — but, pardon, *monsieur, est-ce que vous êtes Anglais?*”

“No, I am an American — when I left my country I was finished with it — with life!”

“Aha, *mon ami*,” replied the Apache, “I can, if you will pardon a ‘*vieux gaiard*’ like myself, I think

I can see in your eye, it is a woman — you will admit I am a psychologist, monsieur. I am right? But come — do not talk, have a porto with me. *Garçon!* — *s'il vous plaît* — ” then bowing to his companion — “ my name is Jean LeFebre! ”

The stranger peered at him sullenly as he answered, “ My name is Harrington — Jack Harrington.”

“ Ah! ” said LeFebre, as the garçon brought their drinks. “ We shall talk it all over, *mon ami* — at the moment it is — what shall I say? — rotting your soul? ”

“ What is — ”

“ The — secret sense of your wrongs, monsieur — the wrongs thees — thees leetle woman have done for you! *N'est-ce pas?* ”

There was no answer. The American acted as if he were daft and seemed to only half register what his companion was saying. But nothing daunted, the magnetic Apache was interested and continued. His dark eyes were sad and his mouth, even his shoulders smiled!

“ Ah, monsieur, you cannot be 'appy because you 'ave *not* ze object in your hands. But what is it your Blake says,

“ ‘ He who holds to himself joy
Doth the wingèd life destroy;
But he who keeses ze joy as it flies,
Lives in Eternity's sunrise! ’ ”

Jack looked into the darkly blazing eyes of his new friend and repeated the last lines, admitted their

beauty and truth, and they both drank silently as they gazed into their individual Dreamland.

“Ah, yes, monsieur,” Jean continued at last. “It is only in the last year I have communed with myself,” he struck his heart. “Ze God of light which is here — but in ze last year, I have become philosopher and in another year you shall see a very different and *bettair* Jean LeFebre! *Je vous assure.*”

This failed to interest Jack; he was mentally turning over a new leaf.

“No doubt you think it funny I am interested in you, *mon ami*, but,” Jean spread his arms, “I am interested in *all* my fellow man, it is that which makes happiness and — ” and he hooked his forefinger on his nose and closed one eye, “and also for happiness, it is necessary to have a sense of humor — I can see in your eyes, Monsieur Harrington, you have this, so all is well — naturally. . . . For the moment I can see you are sad — but even in the most beautiful thing in the world, zere is always a leetle sadness — even this music, it is gay, but, *au même temps* it is sad, *n'est-ce pas!*”

“Oh, my God, that tune is wonderful.” Jack dropped his head to the table and sobbed as the smoke enveloped creatures danced their funny steps wiggling in each other’s arms, oblivious of everything but the savage rhythm.

Jean LeFebre had the heart of a true Frenchman. All crimes and sorrows of passion were known, understood and therefore forgiven by him. Also, he had

the tact to do the little "*Je ne sais quoi*" at the proper moment. So he realized it was well for his "*pauvre copain*" to weep like this, and he knew that in the silence which followed the storm, the flower of reason would be born.

"Take me back to New York town — New York town — New York town!" — An idea occurred to Jean. For was it not also an *American* who played that tune on the piano — one who like Harrington was a — renegade, but a creature of intelligence and sensitiveness.

He went over to the piano and touched the curly black head which bent over it.

"Monsieur!"

"*Qu'est qui a — !*"

Jean balanced his cigarette, rather caused it to stick on his lower lip as he responded, "Monsieur, I beg your pardon, you are an American, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Yes — what then!"

"Allow me to congratulate you — your talent has given a poor Apache much pleasure, it gives me the jagged fascinating outline of your New York Harbor — it gives me the bizarre but powerful spirit of your country."

"Oh, rave on, you poor nut!"

But Jean LeFebre was not deceived. The voice was that of a gentleman, the hands, the contour of his face.

"Permit me," said Jean as he offered a cigarette, "and will you not join my table?" He lifted the

man to his side and was leading him as he talked. At the moment they reached the taboret Harrington wiped his face, looked up, and cringed — as he recognized the pianist — it was Jules.

“My God, Jules Blenner!” gasped Jack.

The three men sat down, and never was there a more appreciative audience for a dramatic meeting than old Jean. “Ah, *c’est extraordinaire!*” he would say occasionally. “*C’est fantastique, mon vieux!* But what will you? *C’est la vie.* Life, my friends, it goes in cycles, you come right around to the same place after all. Some strange magnetism which attracts certain people through all their lives.”

The three talked until morning. The whole truth and nothing but the truth was all repeated, and most of it, dear reader, you know.

Jules was even more sullen than Harrington at the beginning of the conversation.

“I am through with all women, you understand, I’m off them for life!”

“But,” ventured Jean, “you have not even a leetle picture of your wife — a leetle one you carry just for nothing?”

Jules had. It was a snap-shot of Doreen and the baby he pulled out of his unclean and worn passport case.

“Oh,” said Jean, “how charming. She is like a Bouchet picture — that is the type. Pardon, monsieur, but where — where are they — your wife and baby?”

“Oh, I don’t know — and care less! — and she doesn’t know where I am — that’s the situation.”

“*Voilà la manière!*” said Jean. “What ’ave you done against thees leetle woman that you hate life so?”

“That’s just it,” returned Jack Harrington, who knew the cause of ‘the situation,’ and taking Jules’ wrist in his taut hand he continued, “You’ve done enough against her without worrying her life out by disappearing off the map — think it over, Jules — I know Doreen will give you another chance — we’ll wire her tonight and you’ll devote your life to the woman whom you have betrayed — the mother of your son.”

Here Jean interrupted: “My friends, we will have another port — and if you will believe a good-for-naught old fellow like me, you will go to your American post-office and there you shall find words of forgiveness waiting from ze leetle wife with such a tender naïf face. Ha! we shall all go together. But not at once — *à bientôt.*”

Having accepted Jean as their guide, philosopher and friend, they followed his advice. After breakfast in a creamery, they hailed a voiture and stopped at the American Express, something neither of them had had interest enough to do for months.

Jules received a wire from his wife:

“Your father has passed away. I have forgiven you. Return soon as possible. Love from Baby. God bless you.

DOREEN.”

Tears streamed down his face as he showed it to Jack. They were like two bedraggled children who had been lost.

They decided to return and start life afresh. But money being scarce they could only afford steerage passage and rarely have two Americans been happier to turn their faces homeward.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TWO YEARS LATER

YOU may be sure Dory changed the decorations of the interior of their smart town house so that all semblance of the unhappy man who had lived there was obliterated. She endeavored to change the gloomy grandeur of old Mr. Blenner to the atmosphere of the lovely mother whose portrait still hung in the library. She sought to invite the happiness which that sweet tragic woman had striven for. And above all she wanted to prevent her home — “her trusty ship,” as she called it, from dashing on the rocks where so many “city crafts” seem to land. And when — as naturally happened at times, the tempestuous winds drove them into dangerous waters, it was by her direction and control that they were brought into safe harbor.

Very cleverly, Jules’ studio was arranged on the top floor back. Much sun, air, space — but also padded doors and one trying ordeal of a poor musician’s wife was alleviated. Jules might practice one scale a thousand times, which is what he seemed to do when interested. But Dory only heard the beautiful result — when he played beautiful compositions for her amusement in the library. There the portrait hung in

the same place between the big windows and indeed seemed more alive each day — alive with the vibration of the master who had interpreted her sympathetic beauty.

The whole room was built around the elegance and tonal qualities of that picture, a slender, distinguished woman in a crimson velvet gown standing against a tapestry. The walls were quiet and grey and had no other decoration except the book-cases that were very low and lined her room, and their beaded glass doors half concealed the many rows of richly bound books. One very dull deep grey rug nearly covered the floor, and the over-ornate mantel was replaced by a simple one which held a Spanish mirror framed in black and gold and two candelabras which were unspoiled by electric lights and shed the soft glow of wax candles. There was a deeply cushioned chair at each side of the fire covered in black satin, upon which a design was suggested with a thread of gold, and between them a table where were always a few fresh flowers.

Jules had feared the place would be harrowing after his father's death, but Dory had made it livable for the first time in many years, and especially this room, which she built around the portrait. For the first time Jules duly appreciated the magic of that picture. The sweet face of his beloved mother seemed to caress him at times. Then he played well, — for it was here he had wished his concert piano placed, and here in the afternoon he would sit before the fire and enjoy the tea served by his wife — a refreshment needed by both

after a hard day's work. For they both continued the work which each realized was an important part of life. Money permitted them to veil the sordid things and time only intensified their love and facility for their respective vocations.

Jules had attained success. He had followed his wife's advice and made his tour, and the money made from this and from Dory's lecturing went to pay the debt to the "financial backer."

The name of Jules Blenner was as well known and appreciated as that of such women as Doreen Blenner, whose work for the abolition of child labor and plea for vocational training is respected and honored now, and always will be.

While, before the baby's birth, Jules had treated his wife's ideas of equal mental life with playful gallantry — she had always been conscious of a spirit of mockery which had now changed to that of respect and sometimes even interest. Although like most musicians, Jules found his own productions of paramount importance, and found it extremely difficult to concentrate at all on anybody else's except as it directly concerned his — in her generosity Dory endeavored to lay it to his sickness, and indeed Jules was never very strong.

Jules had grown old long before his time. Dissipation had left its ugly mark upon his face. He had paid in many ways for his selfishness, but the greatest penalty of all was the loss of his wife's trust and her heart's love. For he had never really cared as deeply

for her in the past as he did now. He knew quite well that the maternal tenderness she gave him and the nearness of her lovely body was not all he had once possessed.

It made Dory quite sad too. Perhaps poor old Mrs. Sand was right, — she had said one day, “After the chase is over and the girl of his dreams is captured, a man’s pleasure is to torture her until he is quite certain that he has destroyed her. And when he has crushed his foot on the throat of his victim she is prized as the true mate of his life. And in nine cases out of ten not until then.”

Doreen had cringed when Bella Sand said this. Looking back she could see the contemptuous curl of Bella’s mouth as she added ominously — “sometimes the murdered singing bird is brought back to life by the love of another — or the gold.”

But now a voice within whispered —

“Your voice is sweet though you may not sing — and you truly live because you have been brave in the face of death! ”

One day when Felix Strange went to call on Dory, she noticed that he had lost much weight and seemed quite unlike the debonnair Felix of other days.

“Has anything happened?” she asked, as she poured a cup of tea. “You have not come to see us for two weeks — that is a long time.”

“Nothing really has happened, dear, but in an unreal way, many things. To be brief, Dory, I am pulling up stakes here, and in another month will be on my

way to a monastery in a certain isolated part of this world."

"Felix . . . "

"Listen, dear — I crave thought and solitude, I am forty-five years old. Whatever money and mental power I may have are all to be at the disposal of something very sacred. I do not have to explain to you — I mean . . . "

Doreen finished his sentence — "A vocation," she searched his soul with a sweet glance, then leaned over and took his hand in both of hers, "I can see in your soul that a great peace has come."

"Yes, Dory, I'm like Zanoni, after many experiences, I feel I must die in order to live again. Do you remember Viola in the story of Zanoni? "

"I do."

"You are my Viola," he said, "I am not making love to you, dear, but I do want you to know that the influence of your life has counted to me. In the midst of the most sordid darkness you have kept your eyes to the light. No, dear, don't let a tear come now, though it makes them more lovely — surely you cannot be unhappy to feel that for one poor mortal you have been the north star."

"I could weep, Felix, because I know how unworthy I am. I know — " she stopped, she could not go on.

He laughed and suddenly turned the conversation to something material as he lighted a cigarette. "By the way, because you asked me, I've just given Jack

Harrington a job as editor of my magazine — he's certainly down and out, poor chap. Don't thank me, Dory — just as you have taught me to seek happiness, not in the heart of a human being, but in the heart of the universe, so you have taught me by your life to forgive my enemies, as I hope God will forgive me."

They drank their tea in silence and Dory sighed. "Ah, Felix," she said, "circumstances are savage and thought is the chief which can control and direct them." Then she laughed rather nervously and tried to be brave. "You are a big chief, Felix, and I — I am proud of you." But she could not control the tear which fell upon his hand as he rose to go.

Kissing her hair softly he said, "Good-bye — and God bless you, dear little North Star."

Jules' nature had not changed, but when his irritability upset his wife, he would go about regaining her favour like a coaxing child. Making sure she was somewhere within hearing, he played to her. The frail dark head brooding over the instrument always attracted the attention of Dory — the melody would throb through his body to hers even as he transmitted it to whole concert halls of people. His fingers touched the keys and the chord caused vague, strange emotions to live within her. Now, he played — and hummed a little, as the harmony broke upon the silence of that grey room, poignant chords that seemed to suffuse the eye of the quiet, watching portrait. Glancing at Dory a moment he mutely pleaded — then swayed over the

piano as the song grew faster, the harmony more complex, more dramatic — the muscles in his face worked a trifle with this poignant melody as he reached the depths of the composition. Again his eyes sought hers a fleeting moment, and the melody grew tender as it drifted from his fingers, and she felt it quivering in her flesh as his fingers touched the keys of the last lines — softer — simpler the song — and at last, ended.

In the clouds of Chopin's sonorous sorrow he had placed her. Ah, verily, the poetic love which Chopin had so miraculously moulded was made to live again by such interpretative art as Jules'.

At such times Dory was especially lovely to look upon and sometimes, and at this particular hour, she grew most wistful.

"Why do you sigh like that, Dory?"

"Oh, nothing, dear; I didn't know I sighed."

"Yes — I fear you've been thinking again of — the past."

In times of illness — fatigue — or when he had been impatient — perhaps sarcastic — he knew that Dory mutely reminisced. Then once more he would become very penitent. "The past does not exist," he would reiterate — "It never existed, Dory — only the present lives." And overcome with the wonder of her he would demand — "Do you love me, Dory?"

Her kind lips always answered in the affirmative and she would pat his head and smooth the dark hair back and perhaps lean her soft cheek against his handsome

eyes. He always seemed to her — a child — a wilful boy who like most artists never grow up.

True, the storm of passionate love for Jules had subsided but *tenderness* for him remained. She knew it was her tenderness and compassion for him that had *mended* the broken wings of her womanhood, and *re-built* her nest.

She loved him and she did not deem it necessary to add she was no longer *in* love with him — there is a difference!

No matter how much his work was criticized abroad — and there are always hypercritical and jealous people — Jules Blenner was always sure of encouragement at home.

And no matter how distressed he was about business affairs — and somehow he always seemed to live beyond his means — he would lay his fears before Dory, no matter how weary with them she might be — and always he was comforted, and reassured.

Even after one of his periodical tantrums — generally over some trite household occurrence, when perhaps he would end by throwing himself face downward in tears on her couch — Dory would lie quietly by his side and soon her soft luxuriant hair would become a pillow for his head and in her warm strong arms he would become tranquil. And as he lay there she chided and petted him as one would a naughty child. Dory wondered what had become of “la grande passion” she once possessed for him — how could it have existed?

Yet she looked for him anxiously when he did not return in time for dinner — worried and prayed no harm would come to him when he left town for a concert. And when he returned she listened to his account of his triumphs and felt proud. I must say, Jules' accounts of his triumphs were always glowing but his wife accepted his egotism. She served his tea and toast herself — smoothed his head and tucked him in his bed even as she did their baby.

But something within her was dead. A beautiful consciousness that had lived way within her had ceased to exist. His cruelty and infidelity had hurt — hurt! It had wounded her mortally! It had killed! But warm with life was the rosy baby who filled her arms in the morning, who patted her hair, and kissed her neck with his cool, moist curling lips and held out dimpled arms to his father — to Jules, who gathered him and the girl mother to himself, and together they cooed to their own, like robins leaning over a little nest, while pleasure played lights in Jules' deep dark eyes as he luxuriated in the two beings most dear to him.

In those moments Dory was very happy, for they were like a mirror in which she saw a reflection of the flame — ah, that was it! — a reflection of the flame! And after all it was Jules who had ignited it within her — true — it was he also who had crushed it out. But their child was the magic mirror. Something that was the essence of her only real happiness lived in that little lovely baby's face, and she knew that as he

developed, so would this happiness, no matter how far away he might rove when the path of manhood and personal endeavor took him from her — or how long he stayed away — always in her child's eyes her heart would live, and without him she would have been hungry — always hungry — famished for the unknown.

“Shawn” they named the child — Dory's beloved grandmother's surname — Shawn Blenner. The nearest his own baby lips came to it when delighted company asked the roly-poly his name, was “Dawn — Dawnie Blenner.” This with much gurgling and diving his head in Dory's skirt. And Dawn is what his father and mother grew to call him.

Doreen's capacity for happiness became greater than her receptiveness for misery.

Her capacity for love became dominant over all the pettiness of every-day life, and to her child she transferred the absorbing interest which in another way had once belonged to Jules.

At evening she softly ascends the stairs, and slowly opens a white door. The light of a twilight sky streams in upon her auburn hair, as she leans over a little bed. She is expected by her son. His drowsy voice lisps “Mommie.” Ah, the fragrance of his breath as she kisses him good-night, the soft, warm little fingers that grasp hers so tightly and cling there like a bird's wing to its breast. With shining eyes she gazes upon the curve of his cheek, upon the curl of his long lashes, on that tiny silken face. She tucks the covers in a trifle closer, very slowly and quietly, and presses her lips

long upon the dimpled hands and the golden hair, the cunning fat shoulder. He sighs and cuddles closer. Baby so little! So sweet! Smiling her good thoughts down upon him, she drapes the snuggling form with the tender love that vibrates through her veins — flows through her eyes — flows out from her woman's body upon all the world — her passionate maternity.

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